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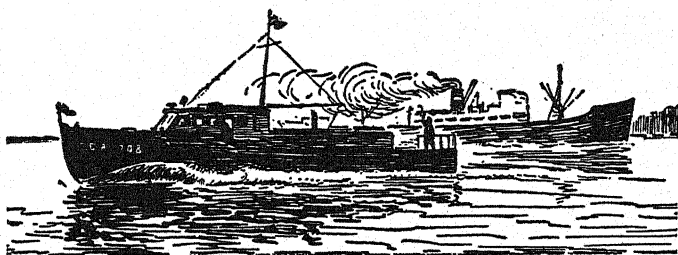
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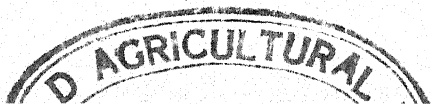
SWING SHIFT

BY HOWARD M. BRIER

ILLUSTRATED BY S. LEVENSON



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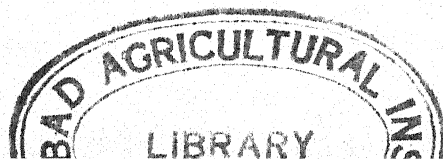
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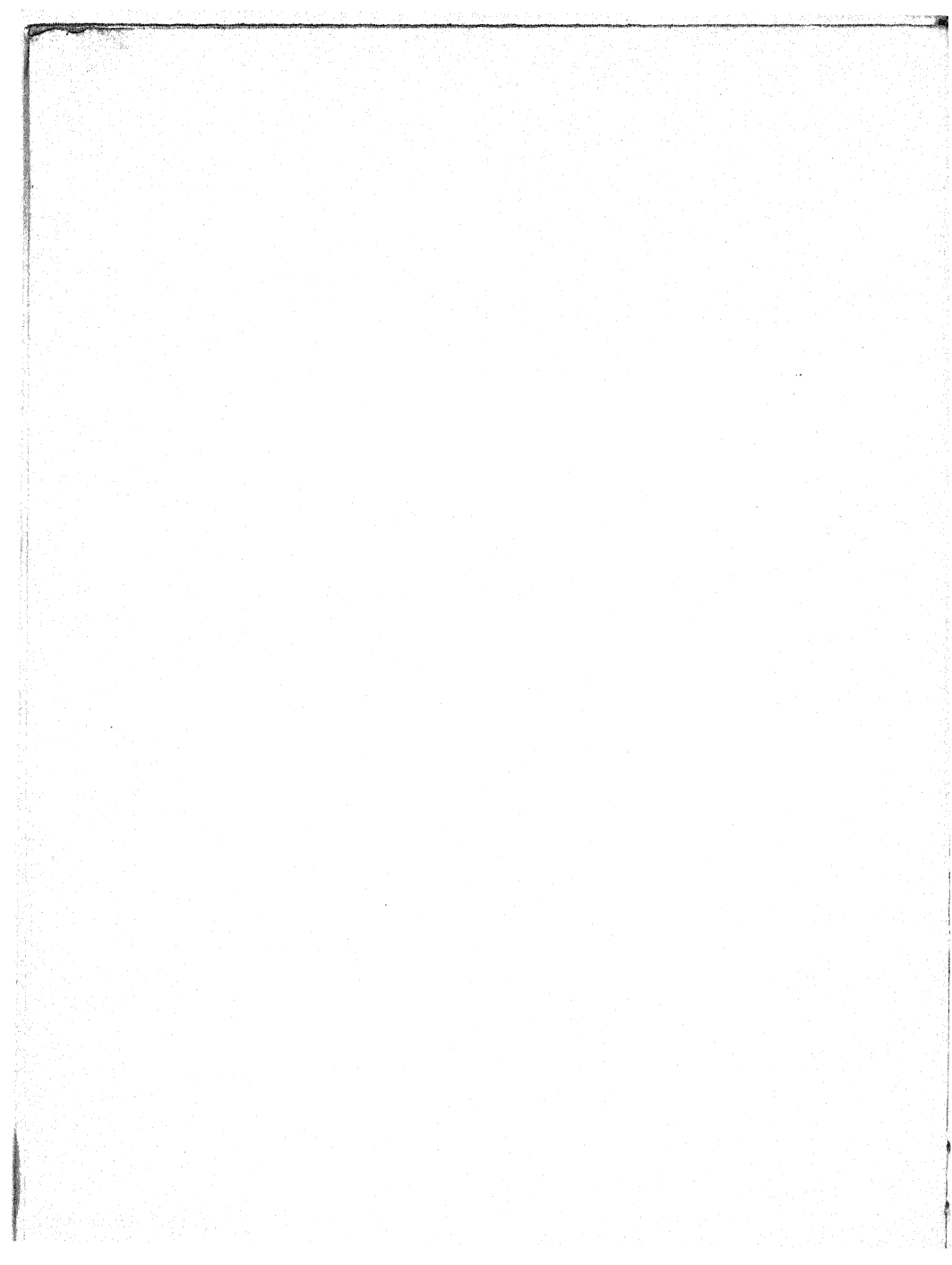
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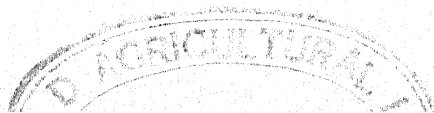
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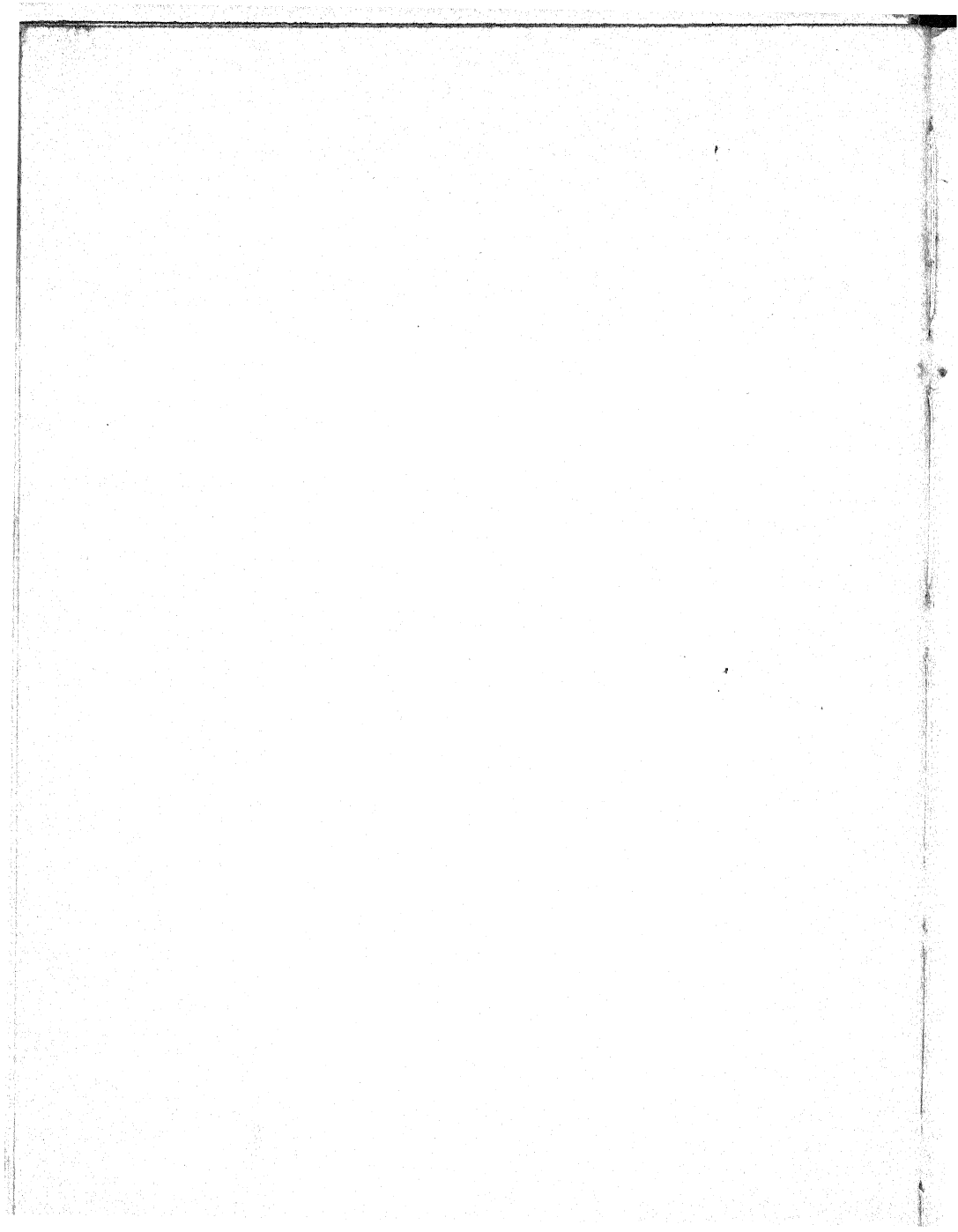
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SWING SHIFT







CHAPTER ONE

SIX MONTHS after Pearl Harbor, the *S. S. Seward*, bringing evacuees from Alaska, nosed into the slip on the Seattle waterfront like some ominous craft from another world. It was a murky afternoon and a drizzle of rain fell from dark, low-hanging clouds. There was no shout-

ing or cheering from the passengers on the steamer's deck. The only sounds were the swish of water along the gray steel plates of the vessel, the metallic clatter of a steam winch preparing to unload cargo.

Dave Marshal elbowed his way through the crowd on shore to a position close to the cement bulkhead. He had heard that a ship was due at Pier 5 and had run half the length of Alaskan Way to be on hand. There was an eager expression on his face, a look of anticipation. His eyes lighted as he saw the high, flaring bow of the liner pushing closer and closer as it edged toward the wharf. The mooring lines were cast off and a bell jangled deep in the engine room. Then at a command from the bridge the thick hawser splashed in the cluttered water of the slip.

"Boy! That's a big ship!" Unconsciously Dave had spoken out loud.

"What did you say?"

Dave darted a quick glance at a young man standing beside him—a young man of about twenty who gave the impression of being older, for there was self-assurance written on his square chin, in his dark eyes. He was wearing the trim uniform of the Coast Guard Auxiliary and his peaked hat and military topcoat were in sharp contrast to Dave's rain-soaked cap, faded purple sweater and baggy trousers.

"I just said that's a big ship," Dave answered.

"Well—" The young Coast Guardsman grinned.

"Folks who live around Puget Sound would hardly call the *Seward* a big ship."

"It looks big to me—we don't even have rowboats where I come from."

"Is this the first time you've seen a ship the size of the *Seward*?"

Dave nodded. "I've spent all my life on a wheat farm in North Dakota. This is my first trip to the coast."

"Are you alone?"

"Yes. I hitch-hiked out here. Got in this afternoon. I expected to find Indians and cowboys on the streets of Seattle, but I guess I've been reading too many western stories. This city looks bigger than St. Paul."

The Coast Guardsman grinned again. "It is bigger than St. Paul."

"Then it's the largest city I've ever seen," Dave said.

"What do you plan to do out here?"

"Work. I've taken a room at the 'Y.' I'm going to look for a job."

"They need men in the shipyards," the stranger said encouragingly.

"I know. But I've never seen a real ship until today."

"There are jobs around a shipyard that can be learned by inexperienced men. You could get work with a rivet gang as a buckler-up, or a heater boy. With a little practice you might become a rivet passer."

"Say, you sound as if you know what you're talking about." Dave turned full around toward his questioner.

"I do. My father is Judson Taylor, general manager of the Northern Shipyards, over on Harbor Island. If you want a job I could get you on."

"Do you mean it?"

"Of course I mean it. You see a fellow named Harper at the employment office. He'll tell you where to pay your union dues and how to get a card. Tell him I sent you—tell him Bill Taylor sent you."

"Bill Taylor? I certainly will. Thanks a lot, Bill. My name's Dave—Dave Marshal."

"Glad to know you, Dave. But I'll have to leave now. Dad's coming in from Alaska on this boat and I'm to meet him. I'll be seeing you."

"Okay, and thanks again."


As Bill Taylor moved through the crowd in the direction of the pier, Dave watched him, a smile on his lips. His feet felt like dancing. He had been in Seattle only a few hours and he had met the son of the general manager of a big shipyard. What a lucky break! He would see this man Harper. He would get on the payroll as a—as a bucker-up, whatever that was.

He looked down at his wrinkled trousers, at the faded sweater with the white letter "F" stitched to it. That letter stood for three years of football at Fargo Senior High, but somehow North Dakota, and the friends he had known in school, seemed far away. He was on his own. There was a time when he had planned to study law at the University of North Dakota, but the war had

changed all that. The study of law would have to wait, for this was the summer of 1942 and there was more important work to do now—work that called for strong arms and thick shoulders. He would get busy and he would be ready when the army called.

Dave looked across Seattle's land-locked harbor. The foothills of the Olympic Mountains lost themselves in the clouds and Dave had no conception of the snow-clad peaks that rose above them. A blunt-nosed tug swung in behind the steamer, kicking up a gray foam under her counter. Out in the open water of the Sound two large ferry boats crossed paths in their endless shuttle to the navy yards at Bremerton.

Dave took a handkerchief from his pocket and wiped the rain from his face. He was not used to this kind of weather, but no one around him seemed to mind. The drizzle could have given the waterfront a gloomy aspect had not everything seemed so strange to Dave. The rain was part of the picture. The gray water of the Sound, the rime-coated ships, the weathered pier heads, the smoke of the city drifting down over the harbor, all joined to make the scene complete. Even the smell of the waterfront added a queer, exotic quality. It was a smell that was foreign to Dave, for it came from the tideflats, the forests of Douglas fir, the creosote piling, and the tarred nets of fishermen. It was the smell of the sea, salty and pungent, carried on a faint breeze that told of oceans beyond the mountains.



It was not an unpleasant odor, though Dave was aware that it was different from anything he had experienced before. The fragrance of a Dakota wheat field at harvest time, or of hay in the loft, or leather in the harness room had no common ground for comparison with this strange blending of new smells. But Dave was not homesick. He was interested. He was an adventurer exploring undiscovered country, and some of the thrill that must have tugged at Vancouver's heart when he first set foot on the shores of Puget Sound tugged now at Dave Marshal's heart.

The mooring lines of the Alaska steamer were fast now, and a gangplank joined the ship with the pier. The passengers were coming ashore in single file. Dave sensed a strangeness about their arrival. Few greetings were exchanged and for the most part the men and women leaving the ship were quiet and serious.

"It's the war," a man beside Dave was saying to a companion. "I've seen 'em come back from the north happy as kids on a picnic."

"You're right," the other remarked. "War does things to people. Those women and children have left their men folks behind. Nothing to be happy about in that."

Dave left his position near the bulkhead and walked closer to the pier entrance. He saw Bill Taylor moving through the crowd with his father—a big man, taller than Bill—the kind of man who stands out in a crowd. If Bill Taylor had self-assurance it was a quality he had

gotten from his father, for the general manager of the Northern Shipyards had the manner of one who was used to tackling a big job with confidence. Dave watched them move across the walk to a waiting sedan. A chauffeur opened the car door for them and Bill and his father settled back in the rear seat. With a rumble of power the car pulled away from the curb and was swallowed up by the traffic of Alaskan Way.

Dave watched the car until it had disappeared. He was unable to account for the interest Bill Taylor had shown in him. Certainly there was nothing about his own appearance to encourage friendship, yet Dave had the feeling that he had found a real friend.

The scene at the entrance to the pier was one of great activity. Trucks were backing and snorting into the warehouse. Taxies, yellow paint glistening in the rain, moved to the curb in an endless line. Policemen kept loiterers back, opened an avenue for the disembarking passengers. The bell on the corner traffic signal jangled as the lights switched from red to green, and back to red again. A locomotive crossed Alaskan Way shunting a string of box cars onto a wharf sidetrack, and the car wheels clattered and squealed in complaint as they rumbled over the switch.

Dave edged his way through the shuffling crowd to the curb, and found himself standing beside a heavy-set man in a dark jacket. He wore thick-lensed glasses that

gave his face an owlsh appearance. A scar on his left cheek reached from his temple to his jaw.

"Some crowd," the man said, making room for Dave.

"Yes," Dave replied. "Do they always gang up like this when a ship comes in?"

"Unless the cops keep 'em back. Say, buddy, how would you like to make five bucks?"

"I could certainly use five dollars. What do I have to do?"

"Deliver a bag. I was supposed to do it, but I got another job."

"Where is the bag?"

"Fellow comin' in on this boat has it," the man continued. He reached into his pocket and pulled out a soiled slip of paper. The name and address of a hotel were written on it in scrawling pencil. "You get the bag from this fellow, see, and take it to this hotel at nine o'clock tonight. A guy named Mike'll meet you there. That's all you have to do."

"How will I know the man with the bag?"

"I'll point him out to you. He'll come out and get in a taxi. You'll be on the other side of the cab and he'll hand the bag right on through to you, see—simple!"

"Sounds kind of funny. Why doesn't he deliver it himself?"

"He has to catch a train."

"Are you sure there's nothing wrong with this job?"

"Of course. You're just a delivery boy. Nothin' wrong with bein' a delivery boy."

"No——" But still Dave hesitated.

"There he is now. The tall guy with the gabardine coat. Tell him Otto sent you."

"When do I get paid?" Dave asked.

"Right now." The man stuffed a five-dollar bill in Dave's hand. "Get going."

Dave moved out into the street. As the man in the gabardine coat entered the taxicab from the walk, Dave opened the car door on the street side.

He repeated his instructions. "Otto sent me."

The man passed a light cowhide bag through the door. Even in the dim light Dave noticed that the man was lean of face and that two deep lines curved like parenthesis marks at either side of his mouth. As the cab doors slammed and the taxi pulled away with a rush, Dave moved back toward the curb where he had met Otto. He was gone.

Dave rubbed his chin and looked down at the bag in his hand. It was an expensive bag, worth several times the five dollars he had been paid to deliver it. It was locked securely and there was no mark of identification on it.

Dave looked around sheepishly. Nothing like this had ever happened to him before, but he decided there was only one thing to do—make the delivery as he had agreed.

He turned down the sidewalk toward the Colman Ferry Terminal, the bag still firmly grasped in his hand.

The clock at the ferry terminal said four-thirty. That meant he must spend four and a half hours before he reached the hotel. He took the five-dollar bill from his pocket and examined it carefully. He decided to have a good meal, and pass the rest of the time at a movie. At least he would be out of the rain.

He climbed the stairs near the Old Curiosity Shop, and made his way along the Marion Street overpass that led to First Avenue. At a café near the Exchange Building, he sat down in a booth, placing the bag on the seat at his side. The restaurant was half filled with patrons and Dave took no notice of a man who entered a few minutes later and slipped into an adjacent booth.

Dave ordered a sea food dinner. He ate heartily, finishing the meal with apple pie and coffee. He felt considerably better. As he paid the check with the five dollars Otto had given him, he asked the cashier how he could reach Washington Street.

"Washington Street? Down on the Skid Road. You go south from here, about seven or eight blocks."

"The Skid Road?" There was a question in Dave's voice.

"Yeah. The district south of Yesler is called the Skid Road. That's where the loggers hang out. It takes in Chinatown. Cops walk their beats in pairs down on the Skid Road."

"Is it safe to go there—after dark, I mean?"

The cashier shifted her gum and grinned at Dave.

"Sure it's safe, if you don't look too prosperous." Her glance took in the cracked visor of Dave's rain-soaked cap and his wrinkled clothes. "You'll get by."

Dave tightened his grip on the bag and left the restaurant.

As he sauntered down First Avenue, a figure fell into step behind him. He found a cheap moving picture house near Pioneer Square advertising a wild west film. Dave grinned as he paid for a ticket. Here he was, paying to get western atmosphere in Seattle!

He found a seat on the aisle and placed the bag between his feet. And again, a silent figure took a seat a short distance away.

The western film was not very convincing, but Dave found the newsreel interesting. It showed the launching of a cargo carrier at a Portland shipyard. He saw the workmen, perched aloft in the scantlings, cheering as the big ship slid down the ways, and he pictured himself as one of them, waving a helmet and shouting with pride. In the morning he'd see Mr. Harper at the Northern Shipyards. He would say that Bill Taylor sent him. With those magic words he would get through the gate—perhaps get his name on the payroll.

It was eight forty-five when Dave left the theater. He did not notice the man who rose and followed him out.

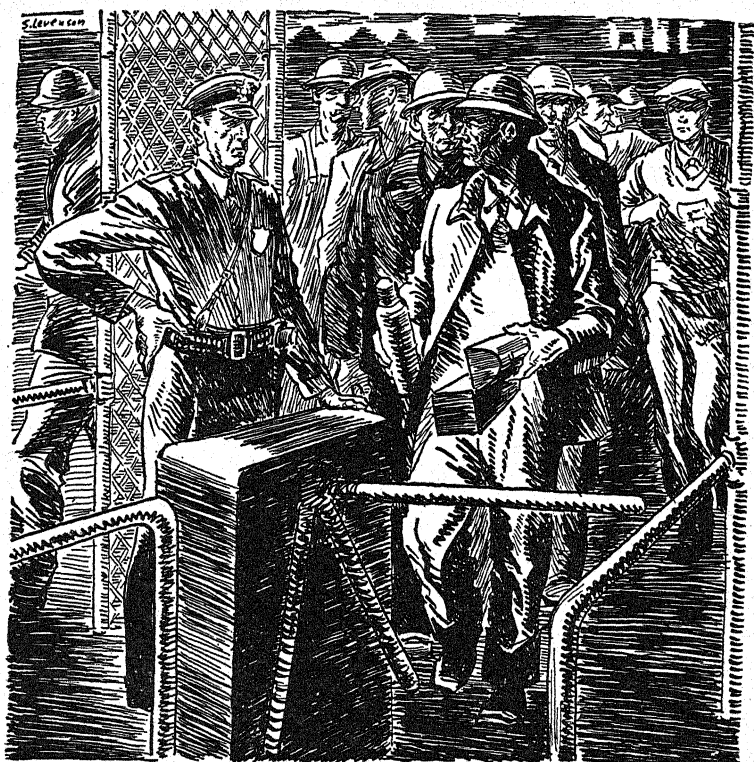
He walked to Second Avenue and turned south, and when he reached Washington Street he took the slip of paper from his pocket and started checking the numbers on the buildings. It was still raining. The street was dark and practically deserted. He turned east on Washington Street and continued his search.

There were several cheap hotels with dingy entrances leading to dimly lighted stairways, but the address Dave was seeking was in the next block, and there the buildings were even more uninviting in appearance. The hazed glow of a street light would have been welcome for the numbers were obscure. Dave hesitated near an alley entrance, wondering where to get help in finding the place.

Two men were following him from Occidental Avenue. Perhaps they would know how to find the address. Before Dave could turn, though, they were upon him. Without speaking they grabbed him by the arms and forced him into the alley.

"Hey!" Dave protested. "What's the big—" He struggled to get free, tried to trip his assailants, but they were too powerful for him. One man spun him around and the other struck him a stunning blow over the head.

Dave's knees sagged, and his grip relaxed on the cowhide bag. The stars that exploded in his consciousness burned out, and darkness, blacker than the blackness of the alley, settled over him.



CHAPTER TWO

WHEN DAVE regained consciousness he was lying in the emergency ward of Harborview Hospital. A young intern was bending over him. Dave lifted his hand and felt gingerly of the bandage on his head.

"Boy!" he muttered.

"Take it easy," the intern cautioned him. "You're going to be all right. You had a bad crack on the head."

Dave opened his eyes wider and looked around the room.

"Where—where am I?"

"Harborview Hospital. The police found you and called an ambulance."

"The bag," Dave said. "Did they find a bag?"

"A bag? What kind of bag?"

"A cowhide bag."

The intern shook his head. "I don't believe there was any bag. However, I'll check with the receiving nurse."

But the bag was missing.

"That's evidently what they wanted," Dave muttered to himself. "I was foolish to agree to deliver it." Then for the first time he noticed that he was wearing a hospital gown. "Where are my clothes?" he asked.

"Here, in this closet."

"Maybe I'd better get dressed—"

"No," the intern interrupted. "You'll have to spend the night here. We had to take a few stitches in your scalp, but you'll be all right in the morning. Try to sleep, now— By the way, is there anyone we should notify?"

Dave shook his head. Then, as the doctor started to leave, he called him back. "Say! There is someone I should notify. I paid for a room at the 'Y' for a week in advance. They might think it was queer if I failed to show up. Would you mind calling the clerk? Tell him I'll be there tomorrow."

"All right. I'll be glad to."

"And another thing. I had three ten-dollar bills sewed in the watch pocket of my trousers. I wonder if they're still there."

"Just a second and I'll see." The intern went to the closet and took the trousers from the hook. He handed them to Dave.

"The bills are still here," Dave said. "They didn't even take my change. I can sleep easier, now."

"Okay. If you want anything, push that buzzer."

Dave slept soundly, and the following morning was allowed to leave. He paid the bill with part of the money that the thugs had overlooked the night before. It was an expensive and painful experience, but Dave had learned a lesson he would not soon forget. He bought a morning paper on his way to the "Y" and took it to his room with him. He had felt there might be some report and there, buried in the back of the paper, was a short paragraph.

Dave Marshal, eighteen, a transient, was found unconscious in an alley off Washington Street early last night. He was taken to Harborview Hospital where his condition was reported as not serious.

Dave was thankful his folks would never see this bit of news. They would worry themselves sick if they thought he was in danger. It was evident from the story that the police knew nothing of the bag that had been

taken from him, and as Dave stretched out on the cot in his room, he tried to piece the events together. One thing he knew—that he had played a minor role in a plot that might have had serious consequences. He was not sure that it was over yet. The contents of that cowhide bag had something to do with it, he was sure. He wondered what they were. Yet, whatever the contents, the man in the gabardine coat did not want to be apprehended with the bag. The person who called himself Otto must have been in on the scheme, also. The two men had let Dave care for the bag until the chance for police interference was over. He berated himself for not going to the police in the first place. Now it was too late.

But it was not too late to do a little private detective work. Dave took a warm shower, and shaved. From his suitcase he took fresh underclothes and spread them out on the bed. He had brought his blue suit along—the one he had worn on graduation night. It was wrinkled from being folded, but Dave decided it must be worn without being pressed. At least it felt good to get into decent clothes. The things he had worn on his hitch-hiking trip were sadly in need of laundering.

The rain had stopped and the morning sun was breaking through the clouds when Dave stepped into the street. Seattle seemed different in the sunshine. The library and the office buildings that had been gray and watersoaked the day before took on a fresh appearance. Dave walked down Fourth Avenue in the general direc-

tion of Washington Street. He intended to inspect the scene of his encounter in the daylight.

He found the alley a half block from Occidental. Battered garbage cans lined the back entrances to grimy buildings. The cobblestone paving was rough and dirty. Cheap billboards were plastered to the unpainted walls of rooming houses. Two Chinamen came out of a doorway and padded past Dave, jabbering in high, sing-song voices. Dave looked about for some sign of his struggle of the night before, but there was nothing.

As he made his way back to Washington Street in the broad light of day, there seemed little danger. True, the men he encountered on the street were dressed in rough clothing, and many of them were unshaven, but they appeared harmless enough. The whole general scene reminded Dave of the back room of a store where tag ends are thrown in disorder. These men who shuffled along Occidental Avenue were human tag ends.

But Dave had no desire to join the shiftless ranks of Skid Road loiterers. He had the prospect of a job in the shipyards and he intended to see about it at once. A policeman directed him to the corner where he caught a bus heading south on First Avenue.

The bus took him into the warehouse district, and he traveled for two miles down an avenue lined with wholesale houses, storage buildings and machinery equipment concerns. At the street intersections he could look toward the harbor, and he caught fleeting glimpses of the

funnels and spars of large cargo vessels loading military supplies for Alaska. Soldiers patrolled the area and supply trucks, interspersed with jeeps, moved in a continuous line along the waterfront area.

At Spokane Street the bus turned to the right and headed for the big industrial area called Harbor Island. Because of the heavy traffic the bus moved slowly. Staggered shifts at the shipyards, and the huge Boeing plants farther south, had done little to alleviate the bottle-neck of Spokane Street. A viaduct was being built to relieve the congestion, but in its early stages of construction it only added to the confusion. The war had caught Spokane Street unprepared for the demands that were being made of it.

While the bus was waiting in a jam of cars held up by a freight train, Dave turned to the man who shared the seat with him.

"Do you know where I get off for the Northern Shipyards?"

"Yes," the man replied. "You transfer from this bus at Eleventh Southwest. You'll have to take a shuttle bus for a couple of miles to reach the main gate."

"Thanks," Dave said.

"Looking for a job?" the man asked.

Dave nodded.

"So am I," the man replied.

Dave looked at him, noticed that he was dressed in working clothes, and that he carried a lunch pail. He

was a kindly looking man, with gray hair and gray, watery eyes. Dave judged that he was well past middle age. The man seemed to read Dave's thoughts.

"I figure I ought to be helping out in this emergency. I've been taking life easy for the past few years. Got a little chicken ranch out north of the city. I hear they can't get enough shipfitters. That used to be my trade."

"A shipfitter? You've helped to build ships?"

"Yes. Years ago. I worked in the yards during the last war. Did about everything there was to do in those days—riveting, boiler-making. I've been a machinist, a loftsman, a rigger—I've even operated a bridge crane handling loads of twenty tons and over."

"There ought to be a job for you," Dave said.

"I don't know. When a fellow gets my age he's a little rusty. I can do it again, though, if they need me."

"I'm sure they will."

The bus started to move again and Dave looked out at the sea of cars that hemmed them in on all sides. He had never seen so many cars in one place before.

"Where do they all come from?" he asked the man at his side.

"Hard to say. All over the northwest, I guess. I've heard there were fifty thousand men working in the four yards on Harbor Island. Half that many are working for Todd and the Seattle-Tacoma outfit. Then there's the Associated Shipbuilders, and Northern."

"Is Northern the biggest?"

The man shook his head. "No, but it's growing fast. It may outdo the others."

They passed the high sheds of a lumber mill and came to a clearing and a bridge that spanned a narrow waterway. The man next to Dave pointed.

"That's East Waterway," he said. "Look! You can see the yards off there. You can see the ships at the outfitting dock—destroyers, cargo vessels and that's a mine layer off to the right."

"One of them looks like an aircraft carrier."

"It is. Northern has a contract for six carriers, and there'll be a lot more after that. Right now Northern is turning out freighters."

Dave felt a strange thrill creeping along his spine. It was a thrill of pride—pride in a country that could turn out such ships, pride in the men who built them and in the men who would man them. It seemed difficult for him to realize that he was going to take a part in this great production job. But the man at his side was tugging at his sleeve.

"Come on," he said. "This is where we get off."

Dave followed the man from the bus, noticing that though he was no longer young, he still had broad shoulders and a body that looked ready for work.

They had to wait for the shuttle bus, and when it came they found a seat in the rear. Dave looked out across the broad, level expanse of Harbor Island. It was dotted with huge silver gasoline and oil storage tanks, with

thick cement retaining walls hemming them in. High power lines and radio masts rose in the air, and fringing the whole area were the shops and ways of the shipyards. In the open spaces anti-aircraft crews had mounted their guns behind sandbag emplacements, and off in the distance Dave could see the glistening bags of barrage balloons. Harbor Island was ready for whatever might come out of the western sky.

It was a short ride to the main gates of the Northern Shipyards. Dave was silent most of the way. This was his first experience with big industry, and it was a different kind of bigness from the wheat fields he had known in Dakota. He had moments of misgiving. What could he do to help build ships? He was doubtful that there would be a place for him in this vast organization of men, yet Bill Taylor had told him helpers were needed. Anyway, there was no harm in trying. If they didn't want him, they'd tell him so.

He studied the other men on the bus. Some of them wore helmets painted red, and green and brown. They seemed sure of themselves for they undoubtedly had jobs. But there were others like Dave who looked inexperienced and uncertain. Perhaps they, too, were looking for work.

When the bus stopped across the railroad tracks from the main entrance to the plant, the man who had befriended Dave said, "This way. We'll find the employment office."

It was not difficult to find, for it occupied space in the main office building. Guards wearing olive drab uniforms were stationed in front of the offices to direct parking and to see that no one entered the yards without proper credentials.

In the employment office an attendant gave them application blanks to fill out.

"I'd like to talk with Mr. Harper," Dave said. "Bill Taylor told me to ask for him."

"Bill Taylor?" The attendant's glance lifted. "Okay, right this way."

Mr. Harper's office had the words PERSONNEL MANAGER printed on the door. He looked up from his desk when Dave was ushered into the room.

"My name is Marshal," Dave explained. "Bill Taylor told me that if I talked with you I might be able to get a job in the shipyard."

Harper smiled. "Maybe he's right. Had any experience?"

"No, sir. But I'm sure I could learn quickly."

"HMMMM!" Harper tilted back in his chair. "You're sure of it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, that's what we need around here. If we had a few more men who were sure of themselves—but that's another matter. How old are you?"

"Eighteen."

"Do you have a union clearance slip?"

"No, sir. I didn't know I needed one."

"A social security number?"

Dave gulped. "No, sir."

"Have you proof of your American citizenship?"

Dave breathed more freely. "Yes, sir. I have that. My dad made me bring my birth certificate. It's in my suitcase at the 'Y.'"

"That's good." Mr. Harper jotted some addresses on a memo pad. "Now here's what you do. Go to the Central Labor Council, and pay your union dues. They charge \$2.50 for a helper's clearance slip. Then go to the Federal Court House, at Fifth and Madison, and register for a social security number. Come back tomorrow at three in the afternoon, and don't forget to bring your birth certificate. We'll start you out as a helper on the swing shift."

"Thanks, Mr. Harper. I certainly appreciate——"

"Don't mention it. You'd better dig up some old clothes for this job—overalls, hard-toed shoes and a work shirt."

"I'll have them, and thanks again."

Dave was beaming as he left Mr. Harper's office. The man who had ridden on the bus with him was waiting in the outer office.

"How did you make out?" he asked.

"Great," Dave replied. "I'm to go on the swing shift tomorrow as a helper."

"That's fine."



"How about you?" Dave asked.

"I start work this afternoon. Machinist, first class."

"Swell. We're on the same shift. I'll see you often."

The man smiled. "You forget there are ten thousand workers in this plant. But we may see each other, at that."

"Sure. We'll see each other. Maybe we can eat lunch together. I want you to tell me all about ship building."

"I can do that, all right. You just ask for Jeff Robinson around the machine shops."

"Jeff Robinson? I certainly will. My name's Dave Marshal."

"Dave Marshal, eh? I'll be looking for you, Dave."

Dave was walking on air as he left the employment office. He had a job. He could hardly believe it himself. He looked at the long lines of men filing through the turnstiles of the main gate. They were the men of the swing shift. Tomorrow he would be one of them. The swing shift! Dave liked the sound of those two words. They seemed to mean business. He leaned against a parked car, and watched the men enter the plant. There was a uniformed guard at every entrance, and as each man moved through the gate he opened his lunch box for inspection. The guards even made the men unscrew the tops on their thermos bottles. The precautions that were being taken made Dave realize that the Northern Shipyards was a part of the great national defense industry. This was war. These men were fighting the Axis.

The victory that was sure to come was starting here, in these shops, on these ship ways.

Then Dave suddenly stood erect. He had noticed a man passing through the gate—a heavy-set man with a scar that stretched from his temple to his jaw.

Dave took a step forward, then stopped. The man was through the turnstile, lost in the tide of men that moved into the yards.

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CHAPTER THREE

WHEN DAVE reported for work the following afternoon he looked like the other men who were assembling for the swing shift. He wore overalls, work shoes with heavy caps over the toes, a twill work shirt, and a rough khaki jacket. He seemed more sure of himself, too, for

he carried the proper credentials—a social security card, a clearance slip showing he had paid his union dues, and his birth certificate.

"That's fine," Mr. Harper said, signing his name to Dave's application blank. "Now if you'll step in that room they'll take your finger prints, and get your picture on an identification badge. When you have the badge come back here and I'll give you your assignment."

The picture they took of Dave did not flatter him, but there was enough resemblance so that guards at the gate could identify him. He returned to Mr. Harper's office with the badge pinned to his jacket.

Harper was telephoning when Dave entered. He motioned him to a chair. When he was through he turned to Dave.

"Have you studied geometry?"

"Yes, sir," Dave replied. "In high school I did my best work in mathematics. I've studied algebra, plane and solid geometry, and trigonometry."

"Good. I'm going to give you a job where you can use some of that knowledge. I'm going to make you a helper in the mold loft."

"The mold loft?" Dave questioned.

"Yes. The mold loft is a large room with a smooth, level floor. It's the room where the actual construction of the ship is started. The foreman of the mold loft receives the blueprints from the engineering department, and it's his job to supervise the laying-out and the pro-

duction of floor frame molds. Our loft foreman is Gust Larsen, and he knows ships from the keel up."

"Will I work for Gust Larsen?"

"Yes," Harper replied, "but there are so many men employed in the mold loft that you'll probably be taken in hand by a leaderman. A leaderman is a worker who has shown ability to take responsibility, and is given supervision over eight or ten other workmen."

"How will geometry help me in the mold loft?" Dave had been wondering about that.

"It will give you a quicker understanding of angles and plane surfaces. You see, the job of a loftsmen is to enlarge the scale drawings to full size. These enlarged drawings are laid out or drawn on the loft floor. When a ship is completely laid out on this floor, the huge drawings will show a longitudinal section of the bow and stern, a plan view showing half the breadth of the ship, and a view showing frame lines of the fore and aft plan of the vessel."

"It sounds rather complicated."

"It is," Harper agreed. "But Gust Larsen can explain it more simply. When you see the wooden templates being made from the floor drawings it's easier to understand. The wooden templates are made of clear white pine, or spruce, three-eighths of an inch thick and six inches wide. Gust will probably start you helping with floor frames. If you show Gust that you want to learn

he'll go out of his way to teach you, but if you're careless and inaccurate he won't have you around."

"I'll do my best."

"I'm sure you will." Harper glanced at the clock. It was three forty-five. "The swing shift goes on at four," he said. "You can check through the main gate any time now. That number on your badge is your identification number. Inside the gate you'll find several glass cases along the wall. They contain brass checks on hooks. Those checks have numbers corresponding to the numbers on the badges. Find your brass check and keep it with you while you're in the plant. When you leave for lunch, or at the end of the shift, put the check back on the hook."

Dave glanced down at his number. It was 8074. He smiled to himself. Exchanging his name for a number! That was something Dave had never contemplated before, but he was doing it voluntarily. Finger printed, photographed, and now numbered! It occurred to Dave that the same procedure was followed when a convict was admitted to the penitentiary. But Dave did not experience the feeling of shame that a convict must feel. Instead, it was elation. He had accomplished something. He had a job.

He walked out of Mr. Harper's office with his shoulders square, his head up. He was a shipyard worker now—helper in the mold loft. He had never seen a mold loft, but that did not matter. He looked at the numbered

signs over the various turnstiles. One read: NUMBERS 8,000 to 10,000. That was the gate Dave should enter. He took his place at the end of the line that was moving slowly toward the entrance.

When he reached the gate the guard glanced at his identification badge.

"Where's your lunch box?" he asked.

"I don't have one," Dave replied. "I'll eat at the lunch counter across the tracks."

"Okay. Move along."

Dave moved through the tunnel-like entrance. He found the glass cases with the brass checks, and after some hunting located the one with the number 8074. He passed on into the open area back of the gate.

Men, hundreds of them, their helmets tilted at cocky angles, were surging around him. Dave hesitated. He saw a uniformed guard standing at one side, so he edged toward him.

"Pardon me, but this is my first day here. Could you tell me how to find the mold loft?"

The guard glanced at Dave's badge, and grinned in a friendly manner. "Sure," he said. "See that big gray building over there? That's the lay-out assembly. You go past the corner of it, and you'll find another large building off to the right. That's the machine shop. The mold loft is on the floor above the machine shop. You go up an incline at the south end."

"Thanks, thanks a lot."

As Dave moved across the open space he was impressed by everything he saw. He passed a three-story building that was marked *Engineering Department*. He could see through the windows of the first floor where more than a hundred men were working at drawing boards, their shoulders hunched, shirt sleeves rolled up. Dave stopped for a moment and watched the draftsmen. Solemn admiration was on his face. These men with their green eye shades and sharp, quick pencils were giving life to a ship—a ship that would one day rise from their drawing boards and slide down the ways with a mighty splash.

He turned away, but the feeling that this moment marked the beginning of a stirring chapter in his life lingered with him. The slogan printed in four-foot letters across the face of the assembly building only added significance to his first experience in the shipyards. The slogan consisted of three words—REMEMBER PEARL HARBOR.

Dave's mind whipped back to that fateful December 7th, when Japanese airmen lashed at our island territory with demolition bombs. Dave felt the muscles of his arms tighten and his fists clench. Here was a way to strike back. Build ships! Build ships and more ships!

From the wide doors of the assembly plant came the clatter of pre-fabrication riveting, the deep ring of sledges striking metal, the dull rumble of a bridge crane moving along overhead tracks with a twenty-ton beam

swinging from her cables. Dave paused for a moment, glanced through the doors. The immense building was alive with activity. Yellow sparks from a dozen burners cascaded to the cement floor as white-hot flames cut through plates of steel like warm knives through butter. Blue flashes of light bounced off the roof girders as the torch of a welder met the carbon rod at the fusion point. Piston air drills, punch presses and bending machines all added their notes to the clash of sound. It was strange music that came from the assembly building, discordant and ear-splitting, but weaving through it and above it Dave could hear an overtone—an unbroken note of hope—the steady, vibrant hum of industry.

Here was the answer to the threat of dictators. Here was the answer, in a dozen shipyards like Northern; in the aircraft factories; the munitions plants; the tank assembly lines; wherever the wheels of war production turned. Dave Marshal was eager to help provide the answer. Dave Marshal—Number 8074!

He found the incline that led to the mold loft, and mounted the slope with determined strides. This was where he was to work. This was his niche in the intricate scheme of production. Whatever a loftsmen had to do, he would help do it. He would be a better helper than Gust Larsen had ever had before. He would keep his eyes and ears open. He would learn what this ship building business was all about. He stopped in the wide doors of the mold loft and caught his breath. Here was

a floor the size of a football field—a vast space unbroken by pillars or posts, littered with frames of various sizes and shapes, all lying flat. Men were bending over the frames, cutting, shaping, trussing them to meet the requirements of the templates.

Dave walked along the edge of the floor toward the blueprint room that occupied one corner of the space. In the doorway he met a tall, genial looking man, whose face was tanned to a leathery brown and whose blue eyes were flecked with points of light.

"Pardon me," Dave said. "Could you tell me where I could find Gust Larsen?"

"I'm Gust Larsen," he said. "What can I do for you?"

"My name is Marshal," Dave said. "I've been assigned to the mold loft as a helper."

Gust Larsen looked down at Dave's new work shoes, his new overalls, and gradually his gaze lifted to the badge pinned on Dave's jacket. "Number 8074, eh? So you want to be a loftsmen. Any experience?"

"No, sir. But I can learn."

Gust Larsen cocked his head on one side, and looked at Dave intently. "A good loftsmen is hard to find, but a helper who can learn is harder. You've come to the right place to find out how a ship is built. Every fitter in the business who's worth his salt started at the bottom, and that's where you're going to start."

Gust Larsen motioned to a man who seemed to be in charge of several men working on frames. The man ap-

proached, arms dangling, feet apart, like a seaman crossing the rolling deck of a freighter.

"Frisco," Gust Larsen said, "here's a new helper for you. Wants to be a loftsmen. Give him the works."

"Okay," Frisco said, scowling at Dave. "This way."

Frisco started across the floor, and Dave smiled as he followed, for a rear view of Frisco was even more ludicrous than a front view. There were two large patches on the seat of his pants, and the trouser legs had been stretched and molded by long wear to fit his misshapen legs. The creases back of his knees folded like the pleats of an accordion. He wore a tight sweater that gave a life-preserver effect to a roll of fat above his belt. His neck was so short that his round head seemed to rest on his sloping shoulders like the head of a snowman. Now and then he looked around to see if Dave was following, and each time he walked a little faster. The situation made Dave think of a comedy scene in the movies where a man, being pursued by another, increases his pace with each glance over his shoulder.

When they reached the far end of the mold loft room, Frisco opened a locker and produced a large janitor's broom and an over-sized dust pan.

"See that floor over there?" Frisco motioned with a sweep of his hand that took in a quarter of the space in the mold loft. "Well, we gotta work on that floor tomorrow, an' we want it clean. Get goin'."

"Yes, sir," Dave said, shouldering the broom. "Where do I dump the dirt?"

"Down the chute in that corner."

"Okay."

Frisco waddled away, and Dave turned to the section of floor he was to clean. To sweep a quarter of the floor in this room was a mighty task, and Dave sensed it even before he had started. He propped the dust pan against a work bench, and selected the area farthest away from the chute to begin his job.

Pushing a broom was no new experience to Dave. In fact, there were many chores around the farm that had called for similar ability. That was one reason he had left the farm. It struck him as a bit ironic that sweeping should be his first job in the shipyard. Then he consoled himself with the thought that many great men had started in much the same way, and had worked to the top. That was what had happened in the life of Henry J. Kaiser, and now Kaiser owned and managed six shipyards on the Pacific Coast.

Dave wondered how Judson Taylor, the general manager of Northern, had made his start. He thought of Bill Taylor, and of his chance meeting with him when the Alaska ship had docked. Bill was right—it was possible to get a job in the shipyards without experience.

At eight o'clock Dave had cleaned about half the area. No one had spoken to him in all that time. Most of the activity in the loft was on another section of the floor.

At a few minutes past eight Frisco motioned to him from the other side of the room.

"Take a breather," Frisco advised, as Dave approached. "You get a half hour for lunch."

Dave had a sandwich and coffee at the lunch counter across the tracks, and at eight-thirty he was back with his broom. By ten o'clock the work was beginning to get monotonous, but Dave stuck with it. There was some satisfaction in looking back over the space he had cleaned.

He had plenty of time to think on this job. He wondered about the intricate curved lines and strange markings that were on the floor. Some of the lines were labeled, but even though he could read the words, they meant little to him. *Rail line . . . knuckle line . . . collision bulkhead . . . bow line . . . chock . . . fore peak . . . stem edge . . . cant frames.* They might as well have been Greek! No doubt with a little study one could learn to understand those markings. Others had done it, and Dave resolved that he would find out what they meant. If he knew the purpose of those lines he would be too valuable a man to put on the working end of a broom. He thought of Gust Larsen as a source of information, but Larsen was such a busy man he would have little time to explain such technical things to a helper. Frisco might help him, but Dave doubted whether Frisco knew much about the lines himself.

But learning the work of a loftsmen was part of his

future. Right now his job was to sweep this floor. He would have to prove he could sweep a floor before his superiors would give him anything more responsible to do. Maybe if he swept it better than it had ever been swept before they would notice it. He plunged into the task with greater vigor.

At eleven Dave glanced at the clock. A sign near the clock said: THE BOYS OF BATAAN DIDN'T QUIT EARLY. Dave tried to find some connection between the job of a man on the fighting front and the work he was doing here. If he failed to get this floor swept it would mean a delay in the start of plans for another ship to carry supplies to the soldiers on the battlefronts of the world. It seemed quite far-fetched to Dave, but it did lend some importance to the work he was doing. At least he was trying to help the war effort instead of hindering it.

There were too many people trying to hinder production. He wondered if Otto, and the man in the gabardine coat who had given him the cowhide bag, were not such people. Otto was working somewhere in this very shipyard, for if Dave was not mistaken, it was Otto he had seen pass through the gate the day before.

He wished that he had never met Otto, for his head still throbbed from the blow he had received. But more than that, he had no desire to participate in any underhanded scheme, and he felt certain that there was some-

thing questionable about the transfer of the cowhide bag. He wondered if he would ever meet Otto again. He wanted an explanation of what had happened, and he decided that Otto was the only one who could give it to him.

When the whistle sounded at midnight, Dave had finished his job. The area Frisco came over to inspect was bright and clean.

"How'd you like the job?" he asked.

"Okay." Dave grinned.

"The las' fellow we had sweepin' out got fed up an' quit."

"I won't quit," Dave said.

"I doubt it," Frisco grunted.

When Dave left the yard the last of the men for the graveyard shift were coming on. He had finished his first day at Northern—seven and a half hours on the swing shift.



CHAPTER FOUR

AT THE end of two weeks Dave had earned fifty dollars in the shipyard. He started a War Savings Stamps book, had his clothes cleaned and pressed, and had rented a small room-and-kitchenette on the sixth floor of a building on First Hill. Though his bachelor quarters

cost him more than his room at the "Y," he found he could save money by preparing his own meals. From his window he had an unobstructed view of the business district, the harbor, and the mountains beyond.

Dave never tired of looking at the mountains. At twilight the jagged peaks looked old—older than time—but in the morning, with frail streamers of mist ghosting along the foothills, they looked fresh and new, like some amazing apparition that had risen under cover of night. Purple with distance in the evening light, they turned to white crystal in the morning sun. It was a startling change—a change of wonder and surprise.

There had been no time for Dave to grow homesick in the two weeks that had passed since his arrival in Seattle. He had written to his family, telling them about the job and his apartment overlooking the Sound, but he had said nothing about his adventure on the waterfront. He wrote at length describing Puget Sound and the places he had visited around Seattle—the University of Washington campus, Alki Point, where the first settlers had landed, and Mount Rainier. He devoted a page to Mount Rainier and then, feeling that words were inadequate, bought a picture post card and enclosed it.

Of his job he wrote: "I'm learning to be a loftsmen. Gust Larsen, who is foreman of the mold loft, liked the way I swept the floor the first day. The next day he put me on helping with the frames, and Gust recommended me for 'in plant' training. That means going to school.

I have to attend classes from two to four in the afternoon. They're held in Plant B, a short distance away. I'll be classed as a trainee with a raise in pay. I'm going to learn blueprint reading and loft lay-out work.

"I wish you could see this plant, Dad," he continued. "There are about six thousand men employed on each shift. I'm working the swing shift, from four to midnight. I've made a lot of friends here, including an old shipfitter named Jeff Robinson. He was on a bus the first day I rode out to the plant, and now we eat lunch together nearly every night. He's a machinist, and he operates a sixty-foot lathe that turns out propeller shafts. He knows all about building ships, and each night we visit some part of the plant and he explains what is being done there. Yesterday we went to the sub-assembly plant and watched them pre-assemble cant frames for the stern section of a freighter. Sections weighing up to one hundred tons are prefabricated in the Northern Shipyards and then are lifted by two 'whirly' cranes onto the ways where they are fitted into their proper places. Jeff says this is a big stride in ship building, Dad, and that before long we'll be turning out Liberty freighters in less than ten days from keel to outfitting dock."

The following Saturday night, with another paycheck tucked safely in his pocket, Dave started for the bus that would take him up-town. As he crossed the tracks a big red roadster with the top down pulled alongside, and a

cheery voice called, "Hi, shipfitter! Going my way?"

Dave looked up and saw the grinning face of Bill Taylor. He was wearing civilian clothes.

"Hi!" Dave answered. He climbed into the car and sank back on the deep leather cushions. "Boy! This feels great. Where's the uniform, Bill?"

"I only wear it on week-ends. Well, I see you got the job."

"Yes, thanks to you. I've been working for three weeks now."

"How do you like it?"

"Fine. I'm learning something new every day."

"What did you learn today?"

"That the spruce we use for floor frame molds must not have more than twelve per cent moisture, or it will warp and throw the templates off."

"Good. You'll be teaching that to someone else one of these days."

"Hardly that. But it's exciting to learn about ships."

"Exciting? Ship building always struck me as a dull job."

"But it isn't," Dave protested. "It's interesting and exciting. Take the laying of a keel. That's the beginning. Ships are like people. They grow, and develop personality. The cant frames are the ribs, and the shell plating is tough, thick skin. Give this steel hull an engine, and you give it an iron heart. The pistons and boilers and drive shafts are like internal organs, and the pumps are

installed to give it circulation. Then, when the ship is finished, the engines are started and the hull moves away from the outfitting dock under its own power. It has come to life. That's why I say it's exciting."

Bill glanced at Dave from the corner of his eye. "You should have been a poet, Dave. If you'd put that in rhyme you might be able to sell it. Wasn't it Longfellow who wrote something about the building of a ship?"

Dave looked hurt. "But I mean it, Bill," he said.

"Sure, you mean it. You're idealistic, like Dad. Of course, Dad's practical, too. He could never get things done if he wasn't practical, but give him half a chance and he's off on some flight of fancy. I think you and Dad could get along okay—that is, if you like to read Walt Whitman. Dad's nuts about Walt Whitman."

"Walt Whitman?"

"Yeah. Dad thinks he's the only poet worth reading. Most of his stuff doesn't rhyme. I don't even care for poetry that rhymes, so you can see what I think of Whitman."

"I've never read his poetry," Dave said. "I think I'll go to the library tomorrow and get one of his books."

Bill made a gesture of hopeless despair. "Well, don't blame me," he said. "I didn't tell you to do it." He looked at Dave searchingly while they were waiting for a traffic light. "You're a funny kind of a duck," he said finally. "I can't figure you out."

"Don't try to." Dave laughed. "People who have spent their lives on the prairie are likely to be a little queer."

"I can understand that," Bill said. "I've been east several times, and I've seen farmers' wives and children huddle around forlorn shacks on the prairie to watch the train go past. I've often wondered what they thought."

"The older people try not to think," Dave said. "With the children, it's different." He smiled wistfully. He was recalling the countless times he had wondered what lay at the end of those glistening rails—of the nights he had sat on a fence and watched the moonlight turn the tracks into thin ribbons of silver. There were dreams to the east, and dreams to the west, and the gleaming tracks stretched like bridges of hope in between. There had been no north or south on the compass of his plans. The rails were unwavering bands of steel that had pulled like magnets in the back of his mind. He knew that the day would come when he would leave the prairie behind. His boyhood had been one long dream of preparation.

"Didn't your folks try to make you stay?" Bill asked.

Dave shook his head. "Mother seemed to understand. Dad made a fuss, but he'll get over it. Mother has the children to keep her busy. I have two brothers and a sister younger than I am."

"Do you plan to go back some day?"

"Of course I'll go back, but when I do I'll be riding

in a Pullman. No more of this hitch-hiking for me. And I won't go back until I've made a place for myself here. I'm sure of that."

They rode in silence through the warehouse district. The traffic from the swing shift had fanned out when it left Spokane Street, and there was little to impede their progress. A full moon was rising over Beacon Hill, bathing the buildings in a misty light.

"Where do you live?" Bill asked.

"Crest Apartments," Dave said.

"That's swell. I'm going up Madison Street."

"You can drop me off anywhere at the top of the hill."

"If I get the job," Bill said, "there's no reason why you can't ride home with me every night."

"The job?" Dave asked, in surprise.

"Yeah. Dad wants me to work for the rest of the summer on the swing shift. They need a time-keeper. I could get in a couple of months before the university starts."

"I'd certainly like to ride with you, Bill. Are you sure it wouldn't inconvenience you?"

"Not at all. We live in Laurelhurst, and I cut across Madison to Twenty-third. You're right on my way home."

"I'll be glad to pay you," Dave said.

"Forget it. This is war. It's unpatriotic to drive without passengers."

Dave waved his thanks as Bill pulled away from the curb.

"See you tomorrow," Bill called over his shoulder.

The following afternoon Dave went to the public library and took a copy of *Leaves of Grass* from the shelves. For more than an hour he read Walt Whitman's poetry. He found it difficult to comprehend, but as he pored over certain passages he found a strange, hidden beauty in the words. Meanings were there—meanings that one could read into the lines. When he put the book down he had a better understanding of Bill Taylor's father than he might have had from meeting the general manager of the Northern Shipyards.

That night Dave ate lunch with Jeff Robinson. They sat on overturned boxes back of the pipe shop. From their position they could look beyond the outfitting dock across the dark water to where the lights of the city were beginning to sparkle. The sky was darkening and the first evening stars were beginning to show. Dave liked it here. It was cool, and the air carried the faint odors of the sea that had seemed so strange when he first arrived. Dave felt that he would miss the waterfront if he had to leave. Night hawks were crying above the docks. When they dove for insects the whirr of their wings drummed across the water.

"Did you ever read poetry, Jeff?" Dave asked.

"Not much. A fellow in my trade doesn't have time for much except the newspapers. I couldn't name five

poets, offhand. Kipling, maybe, and Longfellow. I was never much of a hand to read."

"I read a poem today about the pioneers," Dave said. "It's by a man named Whitman. I couldn't figure it out very well, but he tells about the pioneers coming from Nebraska and Arkansas and Missouri. He called them a 'Central Inland race,' and he tells how they carved a country out of the wilderness. He made the march of the pioneers sound like the march of an army. What I was wondering, Jeff, is it too late to be a pioneer?"

"Well, now, I don't know. I carved a chicken ranch out of logged-off land. I guess, in a way, I'm a pioneer."

"That's what I mean. Couldn't anybody be a pioneer if he marched ahead of the others and sort of prepared the way for them?"

"Sure. That definition's good enough for me. When the explorers saw that mountain over there"—Jeff waved his hand toward the dim purple hump of Rainier rising to the south—"it didn't look any different to them than it does to us. The Indians saw it before the white explorers, and had another name for it. They called it Tahoma, or the Mountain That Was God. I suppose there will be people who'll see it for the first time a thousand years from now, and figure it's their discovery. You're right, Dave, there's no end to this pioneering business."

"I got the idea from reading Whitman."

"Maybe this poet will give you some more ideas."

"I don't know. I'm going to find out."

When they had finished lunch, Jeff glanced at his watch. "We have ten minutes left," he said. "What are we going to do—talk about poetry, or ship building?"

"I'd rather take it easy," Dave said, tilting back against the shed. "It's such a nice night, perhaps we ought to forget ship building for a while."

"I was going to show you how this plant is organized—how the material flows through from the storage warehouse to the fabricating shop, the assembly, and finally to the ways. It's a neat little problem in organization. Not a wasted motion along the whole route of operations."

"Let the general superintendent worry about that tonight, Jeff," Dave grinned. "You can't make a hull foreman out of me in six months. It takes time."

"Maybe not a hull foreman, but I could move you up a few notches on the wage scale if you'd listen to me."

"And I am listening," Dave said. "Don't think I don't appreciate all you've done for me, Jeff. You've been swell, and I'm going to learn a lot more from you. I want you to take me through the rigger's loft one of these nights. I want to learn something about the gear that goes into these ships."

"I'll do it. You'll find some old seamen working in rigging, for that's one department in modern ship building that is a carry-over from old sailing days. Even on a new steel freighter there's a lot of rope to be spliced and

cable to be clipped. It's quite a trick to rig a safe stage for a workman, or a bos'n's chair for a painter working aloft. Some of the men working in rigging are old masters in sail, and if you can get them in a talking mood they'll spin yarns of the sea that are packed with adventure."

"When will we go? Tomorrow night?"

Jeff nodded.

"But not tonight," Dave said, with a big sigh. "Tonight I just want to rest and enjoy the——"

A sound interrupted Dave's remark—the high-pitched wail of a siren. It came from the plant fire station back of the fabricating shed and rose on the night air like a scream. Both men jumped to their feet.

"Fire signal!" Jeff exclaimed. "Come on!"

A cloud of black smoke was rising from the scaffold of the Number 4 ways. Jeff and Dave joined the crowd running toward the danger signal.

Men in the plant, specially trained to fight fire, were already at work. Two lines of hose were played on the flaming timbers, and several men climbed into the scantlings with extinguishers strapped to their backs.

Soon after Dave and Jeff reached the scene a pumper and ladder truck from the Harbor Island fire station arrived. They had hose coupled and a high pressure stream hitting the flaming timbers in a short time.

"It won't take them long to get it out," Jeff com-

mented. "They'll put a thousand gallons a minute on that blaze."

Jeff was right. In less than ten minutes the firemen had the blaze under control and carpenters were arriving with new planks to replace the charred lumber.

"How did it start?" Dave asked one of the men off assembly.

"Don't know." He shrugged. "Funny place for a fire. Somebody said a can of oil got pushed off the forepeak of that freighter this afternoon and that the planks were soaked with it. I don't know how true it is, but there's talk going around that the blaze was set."

Jeff nudged Dave. "Rumors like that start at every fire. You'll hear it from half a hundred mouths before the swing shift is over."

"But it might have been set," Dave reasoned. "Things like that have happened in shipyards before."

"Sure," the man next to Dave joined in. "This yard is workin' on war orders. It wouldn't surprise me. Some people will do anything to stop the war program."

"But most of the men in this plant are good loyal citizens," Jeff argued.

"Sure," the man agreed. "Most of them are like you an' me, socking our savings in war bonds, and dishing out taxes to beat the Axis. But 'most' of 'em don't mean *all* of 'em."

There was a strained silence. Then Jeff said to Dave, "We'd better be getting back on the job."

As Dave turned to go he caught sight of a man who was standing alone, leaning against a transom beam on the assembly deck. He wore a green helmet and seemed greatly interested in the commotion caused by the fire.

"Just a second," Dave said. "There's a fellow I want to see."

As he walked toward the man he was more certain than ever that he was right. The man had a scar that ran down his left cheek, but his thick-lensed glasses were missing.

"Hello, Otto," Dave said.

The man turned, surprise on his face.

"Who you talkin' to?" he asked.

"I'm talking to you." Dave held his ground. "Your name is Otto, isn't it?"

"No it isn't. And who are you?"

"Don't you remember me? I'm the fellow you hired to deliver a cowhide bag. You gave me five dollars, remember?"

"What kind of a line are you handing me? I never saw you before in my life."



CHAPTER FIVE

As the man walked away, Dave stared after him. Jeff Robinson approached.

"Who was that fellow, Dave?" he asked.

"I'm not sure," Dave answered. "I thought I knew him, but he certainly gave me the cold shoulder."

"Maybe he didn't want to be recognized," Jeff said.

"Evidently not. He was startled when I called him by name, but he insisted it was not his name."

"You might be mistaken."

Dave shook his head. "I'd never forget that fellow. He has a scar on his left cheek that looks like a knife wound. And if you ask me, he isn't working in this plant for any good reason."

"Do you think he had something to do with that fire?"

"I don't know. He seemed greatly interested in the efforts of the firemen to put it out."

"We all were. You can't blame a man for being interested in a fire. It's natural."

"I suppose you're right."

Back in the loft room Dave found it difficult to concentrate on his work. The startled look that had come over Otto's face lingered in his mind. It had lasted only a moment, and then vanished behind a mask. But that fleeting expression of surprise had given Otto away. Dave suspected that he was playing some kind of part, and that like an unwary actor he had been caught out of character.

But his suspicions lacked evidence. He certainly couldn't prove that the man he had confronted in the yards was the same person who had given him the five dollars. Then, too, Otto's connection with the transfer of the cowhide bag was no more definite than the passing

of a shadow. He was there; then he wasn't there. It would be hard to pin guilt on a shadow.

When the whistle blew, ending the shift at midnight, Dave had decided that there was nothing to do but wait.

He found Bill Taylor waiting for him at the main gate.

"Bill," he called, "did you get the job?"

"Sure thing. I'm time-keeper now for the outfitting dock."

"Not bad."

"Dad will be satisfied. He claims I play around too much—never settle down."

They climbed into Bill's roadster and rolled out of the parking lot onto the highway that led to town.

"What are you studying at the university?" Dave asked.

"Engineering. Dad wants me to build bridges or something, but I'd rather be a newspaper reporter. I'm taking a few journalism courses on the side. He doesn't know about it."

"There isn't much money in reporting."

"Yeah, that's what the Dean says. But there's excitement. And look at the foreign correspondents. Boy! What I'd give to be in the shoes of any one of them. They're living, know what I mean? They've got a job to do. History is bustin' all around them and they've got a seat in the front row."

"But all reporting isn't front row. I've heard there's

a lot of office work to be done—copyreading, and that sort of thing.”

Bill shook his head. “None of that for me. I’ve got to have excitement. A police beat wouldn’t be so bad. I’d just as soon cover a few murders and fires and explosions. But no copyreading. Let some old fogey read the copy. I’ll bat it out for him.”

“Are you really serious?”

“Sure, I’m serious. If Dad thinks he’s going to have me getting stoop-shouldered over a drafting board, he’s all wrong.”

“Oh, you’ll probably end up building ships, like your father,” Dave commented.

“Not me. I’ve been around this shipyard too much. There isn’t a job in the yard that appeals to me. I want some action.”

“If this war lasts long enough we’ll both see plenty of action.”

“I may get a chance at that,” Bill admitted.

“With the Coast Guard?”

“With the Auxiliary,” Bill corrected. “We get our orders from the Coast Guard, but we spend only two days a week on patrol.”

“How did you get in?”

“On Dad’s boat. He owns a forty-eight-foot cruiser, and he lets the Coast Guard use it for Puget Sound duty. Boy, it’s a honey! We went to Alaska in it twice. That was before the war when we used it for pleasure. Sleeps

six! It's powered with two Chrysler Crowns, and has a cruising speed of more than eighteen knots. They gave me a machinist's rating, and on patrol I'm boss of the engine room. So far we haven't run into trouble, but we're ready for it when it comes."

"How do you get in this Coast Guard Auxiliary?"

Bill glanced at Dave. "You interested?"

"I might be—that is, if I could arrange my hours at the plant."

"Simple. Friday you work the graveyard shift. That leaves you Saturday and Sunday free."

"How would I go about enlisting?"

"Listen, if you're really serious, we're short a few men in our flotilla. The skipper asked me yesterday if I knew of any good prospects. We need a seaman, second class, on Dad's boat."

"But I wouldn't know what to do. I've never been on a sailing yacht."

"Cruiser," Bill corrected. "Dad's boat is a cabin cruiser. If you can coil rope and polish brass you're as good as in. I could teach you all you need to know. It wouldn't take long."

"Would you?"

"Sure. I'll tell you what. Tomorrow I'll pick you up about ten in the morning. We'll go down to the Yacht Club and you can have a look around. What do you say?"

"Fine. I'll be ready at ten."

The ride had passed so quickly that Dave did not realize they had reached his apartment. He got out of the car automatically and called, "So long," as the roadster pulled away.

Dave entered his apartment like one in a trance. Things happened too fast with Bill Taylor around. In twenty minutes he had practically enlisted in the Coast Guard. Not really the Coast Guard, but the Coast Guard Auxiliary. That would mean a uniform. That would mean a job with the government two days a week helping protect the shore of Puget Sound. It sounded interesting. But more than that, it offered Dave a chance to help in the all-out effort against the enemy. It would give him a chance to serve his country in still another capacity.

Dave knew that the auxiliary flotillas were made up of civilians who volunteered their services, and that there was a seriousness of purpose behind the movement that was closely associated with actual duty. Members of the flotilla were sworn in like any coast guardsman, and their commanding officers held commissions in regular service.

Dave smiled to himself as he took his shower. Dave Marshal, seaman, second class, on a Coast Guard patrol boat! A sailor from the prairies of Dakota! There was something funny in that, but Dave decided that he was not the first boy from the middle west who longed to go

to sea. Of course, he was not really going to sea, but if he went through with this idea of Bill Taylor's it would be the next thing to it.

Dave spent a restless night. In his dreams he imagined himself in all kinds of predicaments aboard ship. Officers, weighed down with gold braid, gave him commands that he could not carry out, and he was forever getting himself tangled in coils of rope. Bill assured him that he was doing all right, but Dave knew better. Finally he awoke with a start to find the sheet wrapped around his neck, and his legs protruding through the iron posts at the foot of the bed. He had awakened just in time to save himself from sliding through the rail into the sea. It had been a rough voyage.

At ten the next morning he was waiting for Bill on the front steps of the apartment. Dave wore new oxfords, tan slacks, and a sport shirt open at the throat. He had purchased the clothes with part of his last week's pay, and this was his first opportunity to wear the outfit. The new clothing gave him a feeling of well-being, of independence. He was no longer the shabby, rain-soaked hitch hiker gawking at his first steamboat. In four short weeks he had been transformed into a self-confident shipyard employee, with money in the bank, and a future that seemed as bright as the morning sun that streamed down on the hospitals and apartments of First Hill.

Bill was late, but Dave didn't mind. He enjoyed the

invigorating air. Finally a red roadster pulled around the corner.

"Ready to join the fleet?" Bill grinned.

"I'm not so sure," Dave replied, entering the car. "After the dreams I had last night, I'm afraid I'd make a poor sailor. Ouch! This seat is hot."

"Been parked in the sun."

They swung east on Madison, and turned on Twenty-third Avenue toward Montlake. From the top of the hill Dave got a flashing view of Lake Washington stretching far to the north, of the green fairways of the University Golf Club and of the crew house on the shores of the canal. Then they were dipping down to the sheltered homes along the boulevard and to the Yacht Club nestling on the edge of Portage Bay.

Bill left the roadster near the club house driveway, and they walked across the park-like lawn toward the mooring docks. There were several fine yachts in the basin, and Dave was impressed by their polished fittings and gleaming paint. There were smaller boats, too—cabin cruisers, and trim, graceful ketches, yawl-rigged sailing boats, and small open runabouts, built for speed and fun. It was a colorful scene—blue water, white hulls and the soft green hills of the city rising to where white clouds ballooned in the pale blue sky.

Men moved leisurely at the Yacht Club. They were swarthy men dressed for work, but seeming to work only for the joy they found in their tasks. Good natured

banter passed among them and laughter hung on the air like the peal of a bell. The sound of radio music, drifting across the water from the opposite shore, was broken by the rhythmic squeak of an oarlock and the distant hum of traffic across the University Bridge.

Bill waved to several of the men and shouted a word of encouragement to a sun-tanned young fellow in shorts who was washing the glass on a sleek, sixty-foot cruiser.

"That's Phil Merrett," Bill said. "His father is a big shot down at Boeing's. They're planning to turn their boat over to the Auxiliary. Phil wants to get into our flotilla."

Bill's boat was moored in the slip nearest the canal. A little gate marked PRIVATE offered slight protection to the dock. The gate was not locked.

"There she is," Bill said, with a wave of his hand that registered as much pride as the expression on his face. "Isn't she a beauty?"

"Boy! I'll say."

The boat was a beauty. The V-shaped flare of the bow and the graceful dipping counter gave the craft the appearance of streamlined speed. The hull was painted gray to conform to Coast Guard requirements, and printed conspicuously on the bow were the letters CGA, and the numbers 708.

"We called her the *Gullflight* before the Coast Guard gave her a number," Bill said. "I still call her the *Gullflight*. I can't get used to that CGA-708 stuff. It's like

stamping a serial number on something made by an artist."

The battleship gray of her hull and pilothouse made the *Gullflight* look quite different from the other cruisers in the yacht harbor. Their white hulls and mahogany trimmed cabins suggested pleasure—a cruise for fun on the blue waters of the Sound. But not the *Gullflight*. Bill Taylor's cruiser had shed its sport clothes and was dressed for work—grim duty on inshore patrol.

The oversize spotlight mounted topside of her pilot-house and the pennant of the Coast Guard floating from her masthead told of a new assignment that would last for the duration.

"Wait till you get below deck," Bill said. "Come on, I'll show you."

They climbed aboard and Bill unlocked the sliding door to the pilothouse.

"The *Gullflight* has a 12-foot, 6-inch beam," Bill explained. "That gives us plenty of room for a complement of six men aboard. The crew's quarters are in the forward stateroom under the raised foredeck."

Dave followed Bill forward.

"We have four built-in wooden lockers, two transom berths and two hinged pipe berths here," Bill continued, "as well as a toilet compartment. This is my berth."

"They certainly make the space count," Dave said.

"You haven't seen anything yet," Bill enthused. "Come back in the trunk cabin."

Bill showed Dave the amidships galley, complete with oil burning range, sink and drainboards to port, and mess table with upholstered seats to starboard. An oil burning heater adjacent to the range supplied hot water to five heating radiators in different locations throughout the cruiser, and to two basins and the galley sink.

"But wait till you see the officers' quarters."

Bill led Dave into the after cabin. Here two permanent seat berths were cushioned with soft upholstery. A dropleaf table occupied the center space. There was a second toilet and basin in a compartment adjoining the officers' cabin, and two steel lockers. A companionway with a sliding top led to the flush afterdeck.

"Where are the engines?" Dave asked.

"Under the pilothouse floor," Bill returned. "I'll show you."

They returned to the pilothouse and Bill opened hinged hatches revealing the powerful twin Chrysler marine engines.

"The helmsman has twin throttle and clutch controls of manual type within easy reach," Bill explained. "My job is to keep those babies turning over at 3000 revolutions per minute. We can get twenty knots out of the *Gullflight* without pushing her too much."

"How do you keep those engines so clean? They look brand new."

"Coast Guard inspection. You keep them clean, or else. It's surprising what you can do in a day or two

when you know there's a regular inspection coming up."

They returned to the officers' quarters and sat down on the cushioned berths.

"Well, what do you think?" Bill asked. "Do you want to sign on?"

"Would they take me?"

"Sure. You see, the Auxiliary isn't like the Coast Guard Reserve. In the reserve you'd have to enter the service as an enlisted man if you wanted to serve with your boat. The Auxiliary involves only the part-time services of members and their boats. It's purely voluntary and there is no pay connected with it. Assignments are rotated. Each member is called upon to handle his share of the duties of the entire flotilla. About all we do is release regular U. S. Coast Guard boats and personnel for more important duties."

"I'd like to, if I could arrange it at the plant."

"Right," Bill agreed. "I'll see Harper tonight."

The sound of footsteps on the dock outside attracted their attention. The boat tipped slightly as someone came aboard, and then a man's voice sounded in the companionway.

"I say, down there! Is anyone around?"

Bill had already started for the companionway, and Dave lingered behind. He could hear the conversation as Bill stepped on deck.

"Hello, Mr. Goerman," Bill said. "How are you?"

"Just fine, Bill. Just fine. And how's everything going

with the *Gullflight*, now that she's taken on a new coat of paint?"

"Okay. Gray is becoming to a gull, don't you think?"

The man had stepped back to the dock, and Dave glanced out of a porthole. With this limited view he could only see the lower half of the man, but that was enough to bring him to his feet in startled surprise. The man carried a light colored cowhide bag in his hand. Dave caught his breath. It was exactly like the bag that had been handed to him from the taxi the first day he had arrived in Seattle. His heart was pounding as he moved toward the companionway. He tried to quiet his nerves by reasoning that there could easily be more than one bag like the one that had been entrusted to him.

But when he emerged from the companionway he found it difficult to control his feelings. The man talking to Bill was slender-faced, and though he did not wear a gabardine coat, there were two deep lines curving at the corners of his mouth.

"I thought I might find your father here," Mr. Goerman was saying. "It's about the policy."

"You'll have to take a trip to the plant," Bill said. "Dad is so busy he seldom comes to the club."

"I'll see him there then," Mr. Goerman said as he turned away.

Dave was standing in the companionway, his fingers clutching the rail so tightly that the veins stood out on the backs of his hands. He stared after the retreating man.

"What's eating you?" Bill joked.

"That man——" Dave stopped and then asked quickly, "Who is he?"

"Miller Goerman," Bill said. "He sells marine insurance. Everybody around here knows Miller Goerman."

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CHAPTER SIX

DAVE DECIDED that it would be best to tell Bill Taylor what he knew about Miller Goerman. They sat for an hour on the afterdeck of the *Gullflight* while Dave told of the exchange of the cowhide bag, of the five dollars

Otto had given him, and of being hit over the head by thugs in the alley off Washington Street.

"This man Goerman was on the same boat that brought your father from Alaska," Dave said. "I'm sure he is the same man."

"I can't understand it," Bill replied. "Dad has done business with Miller Goerman for a long time. Ever since we've had a boat he's written the marine insurance for us. We even took him for a week-end cruise through the San Juans a couple of years ago."

"I never saw the man until the night the *Seward* docked," Dave said. "Maybe he's okay, but you'll have to admit the set-up looks queer."

Bill nodded. "I'll ask Dad about him sometime. I won't tell him what you suspect, but I'll try to find out about him."

"I wonder what he carries in that bag?" Dave asked.

"Insurance policies," Bill replied. "I've seen him writing policies for Dad. That bag is a regular desk to him."

"What would he be doing in Alaska?"

"He goes up there frequently. Writes insurance on the fishing boats around Ketchikan and Juneau. I've heard Dad mention that."

"What I can't understand," persisted Dave, "is why I was paid to deliver the bag if there was nothing but insurance policies in it. I have a hunch there was something else in that bag the night Miller Goerman returned

from Alaska—something more important than blank policies.”

“You’re sure it’s the same bag?”

“I’d swear to it.”

That night Dave and Jeff Robinson ate lunch at their usual place on the outfitting dock. They had intended to visit the rigging loft when they finished eating, but they were attracted by a loud-mouthed argument farther down the dock, and their curiosity drew them toward the group that had formed around two men.

Most of the bystanders were grinning, but not the two in the center of the circle. Their faces were dark with anger and they moved around as they talked like two roosters, each waiting for the other to fly into action.

“Take it easy, Butch,” one of the onlookers cautioned.

Dave decided that Butch was the larger of the two men. He had the face and shoulders of a wrestler, and the smudge of grease on his face added to his ferocious appearance. Fire was kindled in his eyes, and the words that spouted from his thick lips fanned the flame.

“You an’ your yellow gang—” Butch sputtered. “Always hidin’ behind the front desks. You’re a sick-livered pack o’ arbitrators, that’s what you are—lettin’ the big-wigs nurse you like a crowd o’ orphans. Why, you welders ain’t dry behind the ears—”

“Swing on ’im, Hal!” It was a shout of encouragement from across the ring.

Dave glanced at the smaller man. That must be Hal.

He didn't look like a "pushover." He was built solidly, and the muscles in his arms were firm. His eyes bored steadily into Butch's flaring gaze. There was something cold and blue and hard in Hal's eyes, like the dull glint of tempered steel.

"We're looking out for ourselves," Hal said. "Since when have you boilermakers ever given us a break? We'll take our chances, and we'll stand on our own feet." The words came slowly, but forcefully, like the measured words of a radio announcer.

Dave felt a tug at his sleeve. It was Jeff Robinson.

"Come on, Dave," Jeff said. "Let's not mix in this. The boilermakers and welders are at it again."

Dave hesitated. "Wait a second." But Jeff Robinson had moved away. Jeff was old and wise; Dave was young and inexperienced. A second was about all Dave had to wait.

"Oh, you will, huh?" Butch gave Hal's shoulder a push, and almost at the same instant Hal's fist cracked against Butch's jaw like the blow of a rivet hammer. Butch staggered back, and Hal followed in. Short, quick body blows beat like a tattoo against Butch's barrel-like body. The larger man doubled up, protecting his stomach. Then he came up with a haymaker that caught Hal off guard. Hal swayed back, caught himself, and countered with a short left that found its mark. Blood spurted from the corner of Butch's mouth.

But Dave was not prepared for what happened at the

first sign of blood. As if that were a signal, the men who were standing in the ring started pushing and flailing at each other. Someone swung back with his elbow and caught Dave against the ribs. Dave grunted, backed away, but another blow landed against the side of his head. He put his arms up to protect himself and saw a man coming at him, fists swinging. Dave side-stepped, and almost instinctively he landed a blow of his own that sent the man spinning.

Actually, Dave was trying to fight his way out of the battling crowd, but it seemed that circumstance was against such a move. Instead, he was being drawn farther into the milling jumble of men. More blows fell and he struck out blindly, landing a fist wherever he could find an exposed jaw. He had no time to think—no time to reason that this was not his fight. He was neither a boiler-maker nor a welder, and yet here he was in the middle of a free-for-all. If he was going to take sides in this, he decided he would rather be on Hal's side, but he did not know why. Then he saw the battle-scarred face of Butch leering at him.

"Take that, you so and so——" Butch swung.

Dave ducked and lunged into Butch's stomach with his shoulder, like a football player making a block. It was the wrong thing to do. Butch wrapped his big arms around Dave and lifted him from his feet. With a mighty heave Butch threw Dave between two other fighters. A blow glanced off Dave's chin. He sagged, reeled,

stumbled. He had the sensation he was falling head over heels—down—down. Dave hit the water of the bay with a splash that would have done credit to a launching.

The cold water surged over him, and he caught his breath. The beating he had taken on the dock had not drained his consciousness, and instantly he was alert. Kicking his legs, he paddled upwards with his hands. His head broke the surface and he filled his straining lungs with air. Dave could swim and he treaded water, looking about him in the darkness for something to cling to. He could hear shouts from above. Someone was throwing a rope. Dave swam to it and wrapped his arms and legs around it. Then he was pulled from the water—dripping, cold, shivering.

The fight had stopped. Men stood about, sheepishly wiping the stains of battle from their faces. Butch was sitting on the planks hugging a shin that had been kicked by a hard-toed boot. Hal was gone. The foreman of the sheet metal shop seemed to have everything under control.

"All right, you men," he barked. "Get back to your jobs. Butch, you stay here."

He turned to Dave.

"What are you—a welder or a boilermaker?"

"I'm neither," Dave said. "I work in the mold loft."

"Then what are you doing in this scrap? Didn't you know this was a private fight?"

"I didn't want to get mixed up in it. I was just standing

around watching, and first thing I knew somebody socked me."

"You'll know better next time."

Jeff Robinson took Dave by the arm and pulled him away toward the machine shop. "Are you hurt?" he asked.

"No." Dave grinned. "Just a little battered."

"You should have come when I told you to."

"I realize that now. Gosh, I didn't know a fight could take in so much territory in such a short time."

Jeff smiled wryly. "Fortunately, there aren't many fights around here, but when there are it's best to avoid them."

"That fellow Butch is tough. He picked me up like a sack of potatoes."

"Most boilermakers are tough. They have to be."

Gust Larsen was walking across the room with his watch in his hand when Dave entered the mold loft.

"You're twenty minutes late, Dave," he said, and then he stopped, amazement on his face. "Well! Of all the bedraggled looking flounders I ever saw, you're it. What happened to you? Get mixed up with a fire hose?"

"I fell in the bay."

"Frisco," Gust Larsen called, "come here and look at this salt mackerel. Well, get moving, boy! Don't stand there with your clothes dripping all over the floor. Take him down to the boiler room, Frisco, and get him dried out. See if you can scare up something for him to wear."

Frisco went to his locker and brought out an extra pair of overalls and an old sweater. "Come on," he said, tossing the clothes at Dave. "Maybe you'll learn to keep your nose out of other people's business."

Dave hung his clothes on a rack back of the boilers and climbed into Frisco's discarded garments. The sweater, which was pulled out of shape, hung on him like a gunny sack. The overalls, cut and molded to the proportions of Frisco's short legs, stopped about three inches above Dave's shoe tops.

"Take a few reefs in the mainsail," Frisco said. "The pants are a little baggy in the seat, but there ain't nothin' in the regulations says a loftsmen's helper can't wear a bustle. Come on, 'fore Gust breaks a blood vessel over the time we're missin'."

Dave was teased unmercifully during the balance of the shift. It made the time pass rapidly for the other men, but Dave was not sure he liked being the brunt of their jokes. Nevertheless, he took it with a grin, and when the midnight whistle blew he had almost forgotten about his clothes.

He made a dash for the boiler room and changed as quickly as he could into his dry overalls. They had shrunk a little, but not enough so that they couldn't be worn.

Bill Taylor was waiting for him at the gate. "What made you late?"

"It's a long story," Dave replied. "Let's not talk about it."

"Okay." Bill grinned. "How about the Coast Guard Auxiliary, then? Are you going to join?"

"Yes."

"That's great. I'll take you down to headquarters next Friday, and introduce you to Ensign Hoffman. He's a swell egg."

"Okay. Friday."

Dave had not realized that joining the Auxiliary was that simple.

"When do I leave on my first cruise?" he asked.

"Not this week-end. I'll have to talk with the skipper first. I've already put it up to Harper. He said you could work the graveyard on Friday to make up for the swing shift you'll miss on Saturday night. They won't do that for everyone, but when you're going in the Coast Guard, that's different."

Dave did not feel like taking a shower that night when he arrived at his apartment. His plunge in the bay had given him enough water for one evening. He donned his pajamas and a flannel robe. For a long time he stood staring from his window at the lights of the harbor. Beyond the buildings he could see the big flood lights on Harbor Island where the graveyard shifts were at work. Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week! That was what the war had done for the ship building industry. Dave breathed deeply. Who said a democracy could not

prepare for war in a hurry? If the Japs and Nazis could see what was going on down there on Harbor Island, or at Portland, Baltimore, Houston, and a dozen other cities from the Great Lakes to the Gulf, they might change their minds about the democratic way of doing things. History? Dave had a feeling that he was making a little history himself. Ship building history!

It was two nights later when Dave had a chance to get acquainted with Hal. Jeff Robinson had to work right through the regular lunch time on a special job he was turning out, and Dave looked around until he found Hal.

"That was quite a fight you had the other night," he said, sitting down beside Hal and opening his lunch box.

"Yeah." Hal grinned. "You're the guy who got thrown in the drink, aren't you?"

"Yes. But what happened to you? I didn't see you when they pulled me out."

"I got disgusted and left. Free-for-alls never appealed to me and besides, I didn't want to be late for my shift."

"Where do you work?" Dave asked.

"Sub-assembly. I'm a welder."

"I gathered that from the conversation you were having with Butch."

"That lug is always looking for trouble."

Dave was ready with his next question. "Is there a standing feud between the welders and the boiler-makers?"

"No, but there's a standing feud between Butch

Kruger and me. The cause of that fight wasn't really union trouble. Butch started it by telling me I was working too fast on a certain job I was doing. He said I was setting a bad example for the other men."

"What did he mean by that?"

"Well," Hal explained, "Butch doesn't believe in doing any more than he has to, or in working any faster than he has to. In other words, he sloughs on the job."

"Why don't they fire him?"

"He's sly about it. Whenever the boss is around, he's working full steam, but the minute the foreman turns his back, Butch slips into low gear."

"Is there much of that in the yard?"

"Not much," admitted Hal. "There are a few like Butch who are doing their darnedest to slow up production. That's one reason why this yard hasn't won the Army and Navy award. Seattle-Tacoma has won it, and Associated, but not Northern. We aren't turning out the ships fast enough. I haven't any proof, but I have a hunch there's a gang here trying to throw a monkey wrench in the machinery."

"That's sabotage."

"Sure it's sabotage. And any guy who'd be guilty of it during a war, or any other time, doesn't deserve to live in America. The sooner we clean that crowd out, the better off we'll be. Hoover is doing a pretty good job, but the F. B. I. can't do it all. Every decent American will have to help."

"I wish I could help," Dave said.

"You can. Keep your eyes and ears open. If you hear of anything that sounds like sabotage, tip off somebody in authority."

"How about Butch?"

"You have to have proof. Butch'll hang himself one of these days. He's mean from the bottom of his boots to the top of his tin hat."

Dave looked up as two men approached.

"Here comes Butch now," he said. "Do you think there'll be another fight?"

"No," Hal replied. "Butch won't fight unless he has his gang around him."

Hal grinned as the two men reached them.

"Hi, Butch!" he called, with a jaunty wave of his hand.

"Go peddle your fish," Butch snarled, as he walked on.

Dave glanced at the other man. He was startled when he recognized him. The man with Butch Kruger was Otto.



CHAPTER SEVEN

DURING THE next week Dave turned to his job with renewed interest. He tried to forget Otto, and Miller Goerman, and Butch Kruger, and concentrate on the requirements that would make him a good loftsman. He plied Gust Larsen with so many questions that the fore-

man of the mold loft grinned whenever Dave came near. He seemed to sense that Dave's approach was the signal for another lesson in ship construction.

Then one evening Gust called Frisco into the blueprint office.

"What do you think of this fellow Dave Marshal?" he asked.

"I can't get excited about him," Frisco said. "I give him a job to do, an' he does it. Nothin' unusual about that. He's gettin' paid for it."

"You don't appreciate him," Gust said. "He has me talking like a school teacher, and blamed if I don't like it. You know, when a fellow wants to learn something, it's a shame if he can't find somebody to teach him."

"Dave's been takin' courses over at Plant B. He don't seem to learn much over there."

"Don't fool yourself," Gust said. "He's learning plenty. We were talking about blueprints today. I started to explain orthographic projection to him, but he's way ahead of me. Give him a plan view, elevation and end view, and he sees a perspective figure without any trouble. He knows all the symbols used on blueprints. You can't fool him with a joggle seam, or a channel iron, or a zee bar. He has them all down pat. I gave him a little test on blueprint symbols and he scored one hundred per cent."

"You goin' to make a loftsmen out of him?" Frisco asked.

Gust rubbed his chin and pondered his answer.

"No," he said, finally. "I'm not going to make a loftsmen out of him. Dave knows more about lay-out right now than some of the men who are drawing down loftsmen pay, and he's only a boy. Dave Marshal won't stop in the mold loft, Frisco. His eyes take in more territory than the area of this loft floor."

Gust was right. That Dave was not satisfied to learn only the work of a loftsmen was shown the next evening when he and Jeff Robinson visited the fabrication shop. Here huge plates of steel were brought from the storage racks by mobile cranes and were laid out on a work table one hundred feet long. On this table a travograph oxy-acetylene burner was to cut two identical plates of steel—one for the port and one for the starboard side of the vessel—with one operation.

Parallel to the cutting table was the wooden tracer table. It, too, was one hundred feet long, but narrower. On this table the templates, or patterns, were laid out and squared up carefully. The manual tracer wheel ran along the grooved batten which was nailed to the template and table, and marked the cutting edge of the pattern. This manual tracer wheel was connected to the main travograph machine by a long arm, so that as the machine moved down the table the oxy-acetylene burners would cut the steel plates into the same pattern that the manual tracer wheel was following.

"It looks rather complicated," Dave commented.

"Not as complicated as you'd think," Jeff Robinson answered. "Why do you think they call it a travograph burner?"

"Because it travels?"

"That's right. The machine travels the length of the tables, cutting as it goes. The steel plates remain stationary. You see, the manual tracer which follows the pattern is connected with the two cutting torches by that horizontal arm. The rate of speed is adjusted according to the cutting conditions, and as the driving carriage moves down the track between the two plates, the torches burn their way through the steel."

"Those steel plates look more than a half inch thick."

"They are," Jeff replied. "Five eighths of an inch thick, to be exact. The speed with which the steel can be cut varies in inverse ratio to the thickness of the metal. See that chart up back of the operator?"

Dave glanced at the chart and nodded.

"Well, that shows that the linear cutting speed of metal one-eighth inch thick is 22.6 inches per minute with this machine, while if the metal is twelve inches thick the cutting rate is reduced to 2.4 inches per minute."

"They have it down to a science," Dave said. "But how do they keep a steady pressure of gas available?"

"It's piped to the job from a central supply depot. All of the burners and welders draw their gas off this same central supply. The acetylene pressure in those two cut-

ting tips is six pounds per square inch. That's equal to ten pounds pre-heat oxygen pressure and thirty-five pounds cutting oxygen pressure. Regulators keep any desired feed pressure constant, and they provide the proper flow of oxygen and acetylene to the cutting torch."

"Isn't this central supply of oxygen and acetylene a new idea?"

"They have developed it since the last war. It does away with the old movable type pressure cylinders that had to be recharged when the pressure was gone. Now a welder just hooks his hose onto a tap, like a water faucet, and a supply of gas is always ready for the regulators."

As they walked through the sub-assembly building on their way back to their jobs, they had to cross over huge sheets of steel that were lying flat on low supports.

"What do these markings on the steel plates mean?" Dave asked.

"They inform the men just where that particular plate of steel fits into the plan for the construction of the ship," Jeff explained. He stopped and pointed to the sheet on which they were standing. "This sheet is called a strake," he said. "It fits into the shell plating of the hull. That letter *P* with the circle around it means that it's intended for the port side of the vessel. This number .75 means the steel is three fourths of an inch thick. The letter *L* is the strake symbol. That means this strake would be high up on the side of the ship, for the first

strake after the flat keel is lettered *A*, and each row of strakes, or plates, is lettered in order—*B*, *C*, *D*, and so on, until the bulwark plate is reached.”

“What does this \times_3 stand for?” Dave asked.

“That means that this particular plate is the third strake from the stern. Some vessels number strakes from the stem, but in cargo vessels they always start numbering at the stern.”

Dave made a mental note of all he had learned from Jeff Robinson. He never expected to be a burner and operate a travography cutting machine, nor did he know when he would be able to use the information about strake numbers, but he had a feeling that all of these bits of information would some day fit into a larger picture. It frequently startled him when he thought of the countless individual items in the system of line production working toward one ultimate goal—the building of a ship. It was a problem in organization that was beyond the grasp of most workers.

As they walked back toward the mold loft he thought of the man who sat at the side of the travograph burner. He was watching the little manual tracer wheel as it followed the template pattern. That was his job—to sit and watch that wheel. Of course he had to know his machine, but Dave wondered if his thoughts ever went beyond the hundred foot limits of the cutting table. Did he ever think of the next step in the processing of the floor plates he was cutting, and the next, and the next,

until finally a great ship went sliding down the ways? Did he ever pat a plate of steel with pride as it left his table? Did he ever send it on its way with a glow of satisfaction in the perfection of his cutting job, and the realization that such perfection would make a fine ship finer?

There had been nothing on the inexpressive face of the operator to suggest that any such thoughts had ever crossed the threshold of his mind. He could adjust the outlet valves of the regulators, clean slag from the copper alloy cutting tip if it became clogged, and see that the hose lines were clear and the pressure adequate, but it was doubtful if he could comprehend the building of a ship. That called for another type of mind—a mind that could see simplicity in the complex—a mind that could dream without wandering too far from the paths of reality. Dave knew that there were such minds in industry, but they were seldom found at the side of a cutting table, or working with the “hot gang” on the leveling block bending white hot frames as they came from the angle furnaces. Such jobs called for skill, but the ability to integrate effort in industry required more than a skill. It called for concept. All of these jobs had a common purpose—the launching of a ship. Dave sensed vaguely that a conception of this final objective was the first step toward a key position.

What he did not realize was that Jeff Robinson was giving him every kind of an opportunity to get that con-

cept. Jeff Robinson was an old man who had spent the better part of his life working in shipyards. He had the concept, but he had never made use of it. The best he could do was invest his money in a chicken ranch, and he would not be helping Dave now were it not for the war. Jeff seemed to take a keen delight in directing Dave's mind along the paths he had failed to follow. Like an old schoolmaster who finds satisfaction in the success of a bright pupil, Jeff found pleasure in passing his knowledge on to Dave. He asked for nothing in return. The mounting interest that Dave exhibited was more than enough to repay him for the time he spent.

"Tomorrow," Jeff said, "we'll eat lunch near the Number 2 ways. I noticed they were laying keel blocks down there today, and that means the crane lifts will be laying a flat keel tomorrow."

"That'll be great," Dave said. "Don't let them hand you any special jobs, because I'd hate to miss it."

"We won't miss it. I'll meet you back of the Crane Ways."

On his way to the mold loft, Dave stopped to watch a "cherry picker" crane drop a load of twelve-foot frames headed for the bending tables. The "cherry pickers" always fascinated Dave, for they moved through the yards with the speed of a delivery truck, and the operator could push the long arm of the crane through a doorway to pick up a load. Jeff had told him that they



were called "cherry pickers" because they could reach anywhere.

Dave always wore a helmet on his trips with Jeff. A hard hat was not necessary in the mold loft, but beyond certain points in the yards it was required equipment. When men were working overhead on assembly, on cranes and scantlings, tools and pieces of metal might easily fall. A blow on the head could mean serious injury, and the hard hat rule was one that the safety board insisted upon.

As Dave grew more familiar with his surroundings he took a greater interest in the progress that was being made with the ships on the ways. He had walked along the catwalk that was built around the stern posts of the ships under construction, and he had seen the different stages in the building of a freighter. The hull on Number 10 ways was almost ready for launching, while others were mere shells, with intercostals and plate frames curving up from the bilge plating like the ribs of a sea monster. There were some with bulkheads in, and others with deck plating welded to transverse beams.

These were large ships Northern was building. They measured more than five hundred feet in length. Though they were built to carry cargo, they could be converted to auxiliary aircraft carriers. They were not like the old time heavy bottoms that were built for commerce. Instead, they had graceful lines, with aft and bow curves fashioned for speed. There was a minimum of riveting

in their hulls, for welding had proven a faster and stronger way of fusing plates.

Modern ships! That was what Northern Shipyards was building. As Dave walked toward his job he experienced a possessive feeling. These were his buildings, his cranes, his ships. The Northern Shipyards belonged to him. He had made a place for himself here, and even though Frisco had shown antagonism at times, his place seemed secure. There was loyalty in his feelings, too—something like the loyalty he had known back in Fargo Senior High School, but not quite the same. This loyalty was a grown-up loyalty—the kind a man might show for his home, or business, or country. It was deep. It welled from within, and left Dave a bit breathless, a bit surprised that he could experience such things.

He recalled what Hal had said about the winning of the "E" for excellence. There was no reason why Northern Shipyards should not have that recognition. Dave asked Gust Larsen about it when he was back on the job.

"We almost made the grade last month," Gust Larsen said thoughtfully, "when we launched two ships in two days, and we would have, too, if there hadn't been a threat of labor trouble in the yards earlier in the month. Things weren't going so well for a while. There was talk of a picket line, and everybody was jittery. That kind of monkey business doesn't help win the 'E.' Not in war time, it doesn't."

"Is there any threat of labor trouble now?"

"No. Can't say there is. The only thing that's hindering us now is speed in production. We still have a few bottle-necks to iron out. They're pushing them down the ways faster in Portland and Richmond, and unless we can make a stab at matching Kaiser for speed, we won't get to first base."

"But our ships are just as good when they're finished," Dave countered.

"Sure, they're just as good, and if you ask me, they're a little better; but speed is what counts today. You can build a better ship in one hundred days than you can in fifty, but fifty is too slow for the Navy 'E.' We'll have to turn out good ships in less than twenty days, and keep turning them out, month after month. There's no end to this job until the doughboys take up residence in Tokyo and Berlin. Even then, it won't be over. When the last shot is fired in this war America is going to take her place in the world of foreign trade. We'll have more bottoms flying the Stars and Stripes than we ever had before. Ship building is here to stay for a long time."

Gust Larsen's words only added incentive to a purpose that had been slowly forming in Dave's mind. It was a purpose that had much to do with his future. The details were a little hazy, but they concerned the university and a course in engineering. Dave Marshal was going to build things. Boats, bridges, dams! For several months he had been acutely aware of the fact that Hit-

ler, Hirohito and Mussolini had been tearing the world apart. Men would have to put it back together again. There would be plenty of building to do when this war was over. Maybe—maybe by that time Dave would be ready.

That night on the way home Dave questioned Bill Taylor about the university.

"What requirements do you need for a course in engineering, Bill?"

Bill darted a sidewise glance at Dave. "Don't tell me you're thinking about engineering."

"I might be. Why?"

"It's a tough course. You have to be a hound for punishment."

"I could take a little punishment."

"Well, how about math? Do you think you could swallow trig and calculus?"

"I've had high school trig," Dave said. "I like math."

"Ugh," Bill said, screwing up his face. "How can you say a thing like that?"

"I mean it. I think math is interesting."

"Well, okay. Dad says it takes all kinds of people to make a world, and I guess you're one of the kinds. What do you want to know about the university?"

"Does it cost much? Could a fellow work his way through? Would my credits from Fargo High be good at the University of Washington?"

"The answer is yes."

"To all three questions?"

Bill nodded. "It costs plenty. You could work your way through. Your credits are good."

"When does the fall quarter start?"

"First week in October."

"That's two months away." After a little mental arithmetic Dave said, "I should be able to save enough for my first quarter's tuition by then."

"You figuring on quitting your job?"

"No. Working the swing shift, I could attend classes in the morning."

"When are you going to study?" Bill was plainly impressed.

"Whenever I can find time."

"That's a big order. Do all the boys from North Dakota have as much ambition as that?"

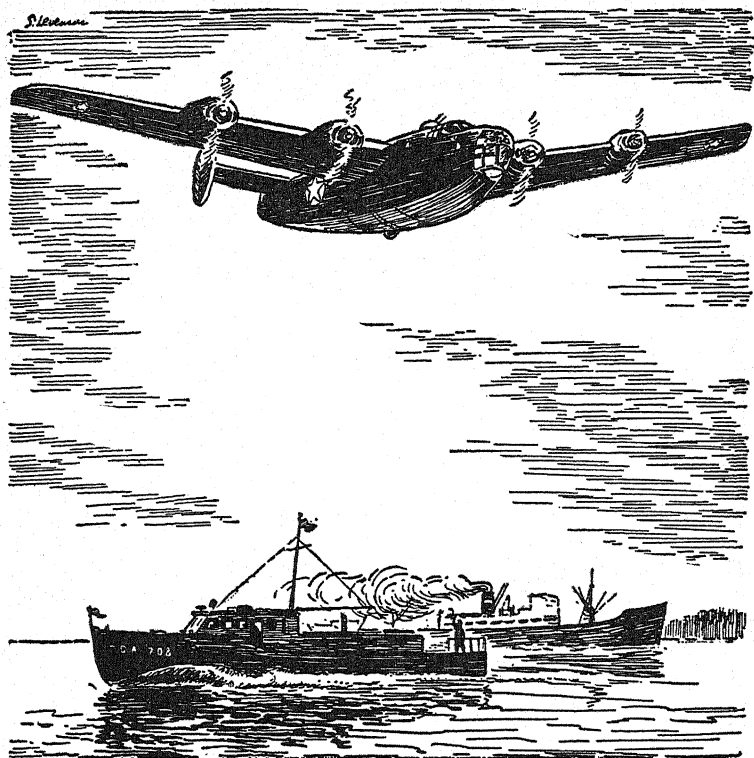
"I couldn't say." Dave laughed and then his face sobered. "The fellows I knew back there were glad for any breaks they got."

That night Dave lay awake thinking of his new plans. Bill had promised to bring some catalogs and time schedules. He had also offered to help Dave map a course that would lead to a degree in engineering. A degree in engineering! That sounded like some unattainable dream. How could a farm boy like Dave Marshal ever gain a degree in engineering? Impossible! Yet others had done it. Others had followed the wisp of an idea through long weary years to find it was attainable—that it was real.

Dave turned on his pillow. His window was a narrow rectangle of night sky. A lone star gleamed down. Dave's mind went back to childhood days on the prairie when he had lifted his face to the sky and recited a little jingle about the stars. His lips were whispering the words now:

*Star bright; star light,
First star I've seen tonight . . .*

He closed his eyes. He was smiling when he fell asleep.



CHAPTER EIGHT

WHEN DAVE went on his first patrol cruise aboard the *Gullflight*, he took along the university pamphlets and catalogs that Bill had given him. The cruiser did not seem entirely unfamiliar to Dave, for he had spent several days at the Yacht Club, literally "learning the

ropes." Bill had taught him all of the duties that would be expected of a seaman, second class, and then he had taken him to headquarters where he had been sworn in by an officer of the Coast Guard. He was now a full-fledged member of the Auxiliary.

If Dave had expected excitement on his first cruise, he was disappointed, for the trip amounted to nothing more than routine patrol for the CGA-708. But it was interesting.

The trip started Saturday morning from the yacht basin on Portage Bay. Provisions and fuel for a two-day cruise had been stored aboard, and when everything was in readiness Matt Garland, the chief bos'n's mate, gave Dave the signal to cast off. With the mooring lines free, the trim *Gullflight* backed slowly away from the slip. When there was plenty of clearance the helmsman indicated slow speed ahead, and Bill shifted the manual control. The boat swung in a graceful arc toward the north, and veered away to the left.

Dave, coiling the mooring line on the raised fore-deck, paused to watch the green lawns and the stately buildings of the campus slip past on the starboard side. It was a big campus, spreading over acres of park-like grounds, with tall fir trees and spreading shade trees growing side by side. The Gothic buildings were large and impressive, and the morning sun glinted off a hundred classroom windows. Dave thrilled at the thought of attending classes in those buildings. Already he had

a feeling that he belonged to this university, though his only connection with it lay in a well-thumbed catalog that he had carefully tucked away in his duffel kit.

The cruiser passed the Showboat Theater and the Motor Boat Marina. Ahead, stretching in a long span across the channel, was the University Bridge, jammed with traffic at this hour of the morning. A dog-leg passage joins Portage Bay with Lake Union, and the *Gull-flight* moved on into the larger body of water, her thin bow cutting the green surface and churning a white wash under her counter.

There was a time when Lake Union had been a lonely lake, far removed from the little pioneer city that struggled for existence on the waters of Elliott Bay, but that time was long ago, in the days of the Indian wars. The Indians had called the lake *Tenas Chuck*, or *Little Waters*. Seattle had grown since then, spreading like a prairie fire, sweeping everything before it. The forest had been cut away, the stumps had been blasted, the wild berry vines and salal had been grubbed from the ground, and a city had risen out of the wilderness. Lake Union was no longer a quiet, peaceful forest lake—it was a land-locked harbor, connected with Puget Sound and the ocean by the government locks at Ballard. Sea-going freighters came poking in to its marine ways for repairs, snub-nosed tugs pulled barges of sand and gravel to its docks, and roaring seaplanes dug their floats into its placid surface to stir strange life in the lake that had once

known only the gentle push of a dugout canoe. Along its shores there was the rush of traffic, and on the surrounding hills homes and apartments had risen where giant Douglas fir had fallen.

The cruiser rounded the point where the gray, unsightly tanks of the gas company huddled together, and passed under the high, slender span of the Aurora Bridge. Beyond, the water narrowed to a channel dug only wide enough to accommodate an ocean freighter. This was the Fremont Canal, scarcely more than a ribbon of water, linking Lake Union and Lake Washington with the Sound. The *Gullflight* moved down the center of this narrow strip of water, and the wash from her bow waves barely had time to form before they were curling up against the low banks of the channel.

As they approached the Ballard Bridge, the banks drew farther apart to enclose Salmon Bay, cluttered with log booms for the Ballard mills and with mooring floats for the fishing fleet. Most of the purse seiners had already departed for Alaska, but there were several halibut schooners back with their first catch, and preparing for another dash to the fishing banks off Cape Flattery.

Dave waited on the afterdeck for further orders but there seemed to be little for him to do. Tod Palmer, a young telephone company employee with a first-class seaman rating, joined him. They sat on the deck above the trunk cabin.

"How are you making out?" Tod asked.

"Not bad," Dave replied. "I feel like a passenger."

"Everyone does on his first trip. You'll get used to it, though, and you'll find there's plenty of work to be done. You and I are at the bottom of the rating on this craft, so we'll be expected to dish up the meals for the other men."

"I haven't done much cooking," Dave said.

"Leave the cooking to me," Tod said. "I've made a hobby of it. Your job will be to wait on the officers' mess and clean up the galley afterwards."

"I can do that all right," Dave grinned.

"Swell. It really isn't so bad. It's like camping out most of the time. We have a lot of fun on these trips. Garland is a good skipper and he doesn't insist on too much formality except when we're in port. Then we have to step lively and everything has to be shipshape. This is a queer kind of service we're in. A civilian Coast Guard is what it amounts to. We have to be ready for anything and that calls for discipline. We never know when we might be given a detail of real importance. So far, it's all been patrol and routine stuff, but then, the Auxiliary has only been operating since December 7th."

"What's our detail for today?" Dave asked.

"We're going to Bremerton first to pick up Ensign Hoffman. We'll take him back to the Harbor Island Coast Guard station, then we head north through Admiralty Inlet to Port Townsend and Port Angeles."

"Sounds like quite a trip."

"It is. We'll cover a lot of water before tomorrow night."

The helmsman was whistling for the Ballard Locks, the signal for Dave and Tod Palmer to move forward.

"Ever been through the locks?" Tod asked.

Dave shook his head.

"There's only one drop of about twenty feet," Tod said, "but the main lock is eight hundred feet long. I've seen a Luckenbach freighter go through here—that's how big they are."

There was a fishing boat and a small cabin cruiser waiting to go through the locks, and the men aboard them hailed the arrival of the Coast Guard cruiser, for that meant immediate service.

The big gates inched open as the *Gullflight* approached, and all three boats moved slowly into the slip. When they were properly stationed, the thick gates closed behind them, and as the sluices were opened, the water in the slip started to lower. It was a strange sensation to Dave, standing on the deck of the *Gullflight*, and having the thick cement sides of the lock seem to rise as the boats went down. Finally, the water in the locks reached the level of Puget Sound, but to Dave it seemed as if the boats were trapped in the bottom of some huge excavation. Then the western gates of the locks opened slowly, and they had a straight run out into the channel that led to the Sound.

"How'd you like it?" Tod Palmer asked, when they

were clear of the locks and were pushing out into open water.

"Quite an experience," Dave answered.

But the locks were soon forgotten in the exhilaration of cruising across the choppy waters of the Sound. A good breeze was blowing down the inlet, but the sky was clear and the sun showered down its warmth. They soon left the ferry slip and the docks of Ballard astern, and rounded the West Point lighthouse, setting their course for the southern tip of Bainbridge Island.

Dave was fascinated by the lighthouse. He had never been so close to a lighthouse, though pictures of them in the magazines had always caught his attention. The buildings looked spotless in their coat of white paint, and the white picket fence that enclosed the government property seemed to single out this patch of sandy shore and dedicate it to the service of all who followed the sea.

And he was following the sea, now. He looked down at the insignia on the sleeve of his Coast Guard uniform that marked him as a seaman, second class. He was at the bottom of the ladder as far as sea-going rank was concerned, but Dave was satisfied. He hitched his trousers up and turned to the task of polishing the brass rail of the afterdeck, his first assignment from the second mate, Joe Allen.

Dave liked Joe Allen. Bill had told him Joe had a teaching fellowship at the university in the history de-

partment. Joe looked bright. There was a sparkle in his eyes and his lips broke in a quick smile.

"He's a good egg," Bill had said, and Dave agreed.

When Joe had asked him to polish brass he made the order sound like a privilege, and Dave had jumped to help. But even while he was polishing, Dave lifted his head frequently to fill his lungs with the fresh, cool air. Everything smelled so clean here on the Sound. The breeze carried the tang of salt and the faint odor of pine from the forested foothills.

From the deck of the *Gullflight* Dave could look far up the inlet past Foulweather Bluff to where the deep blue of the water faded into the haze of the sky and, to the south, the water wound in a mighty reach beyond distant islands. Though Bill had told him that Puget Sound was more than two hundred miles long and that its rugged shoreline was broken with canals and innumerable islands, he had never realized what a large body of water it really was. One could cruise for weeks on Puget Sound and never visit the same bay twice. It was an inland sea, joined to the Pacific by the broad Strait of Juan de Fuca, and Dave was to explore its countless harbors on the *Gullflight*. He owed a lot to Bill Taylor and he knew it. He only hoped that he could repay him some day for all he had done.

Dave wondered what his father and mother would say if they could see him now. Here he was cruising on a fine boat that belonged to the general manager of

a huge shipyard, and he belonged here. He was part of the crew. His father would be speechless if he could see him now, and his mother would tilt her head quizzically and deep wonder would fill her quiet eyes. Dave Marshal, sailing the waters of Puget Sound on a trim cabin cruiser! Dave Marshal, the tan-faced prairie boy, guarding the coast! It hardly sounded real, but here was a rail to be polished—a ship's rail to prove it was true.

They were still several miles off the tip of Bainbridge when Joe Allen came aft.

"Tod wants you in the galley," he said. "He's whipping up a lunch. You can let that job go and finish it this afternoon."

"Yes, sir," Dave said, picking up his cloth and can of polish.

He found Tod Palmer in the galley, with a cook's hat cocked on his head and a white apron tied under his arm-pits.

"Hi, sailor!" Tod said. "Slip into that mess jacket, an' we'll throw the chow."

Tod had soup steaming in a big kettle, and he was cutting thick slices of ham for sandwiches. The odor of fresh coffee permeated the galley, and big cuts of golden cantaloupe right out of the ice box rested with tempting fragrance on the counter.

"You can set the table in the after cabin," Tod said. "You'll find a clean cloth in that cupboard. Dishes are here; silverware in that drawer."

Dave took a quick glance at the inviting food before starting his job. "They sure eat well in the Coast Guard." He grinned.

"'Eat while you can' is my motto," Tod said, "for tomorrow we may have to dig clams."

When the table was set and the food ready, Tod stuck his head through the companionway to the pilothouse.

"Come and get it," he shouted.

Then, untying his apron, he turned to Dave. "We'll have to take over while they're eating. We'll have plenty of time to eat later." Dave gave the food a last wistful glance and followed Tod into the pilothouse.

"Think you can keep her off the shore?" Matt Garland asked, with a grin.

"Yes, sir," Tod replied. "But you had better get back here before we reach the restricted area. I don't want to wrap the *Gullflight* around a submerged mine."

"Don't worry," Garland said. "We'll be back in ten minutes."

"What do you mean, restricted area?" Dave asked, when the skipper and Bill Taylor had left.

"The approaches to Sinclair Inlet are all restricted," Tod said. "Bremerton is a major naval base, you know. The navy doesn't want any submarines or surface vessels sneaking in here."

"Does Matt Garland know the channel?"

"Yes. He has access to naval charts."

Dave watched Joe as he took his trick at the helm. It was evident that he knew what he was doing.

"How long have you been on the *Gullflight*?" Dave asked.

"Ever since January. I came on when Bill's father applied for Auxiliary registry."

"You seem to know how to run this boat."

"I ought to. I have a ketch of my own. I've been sailing around this Sound since I was old enough to walk."

The *Gullflight* was off Decatur Reef when Matt Garland and Bill returned to the pilothouse.

"I must be slipping," Garland said, glancing at his wrist watch. "It took us fifteen minutes."

"But you can't blame him," Bill said. "He ate four of those sandwiches."

Dave and Tod returned to the galley.

"Now it's our turn," Tod said. "One thing about being chief cook and bottle washer—we can eat like kings."

Dave cleared the table and put clean plates and silverware on the cloth. Tod brought the food in.

Dave had all the sandwiches he could eat, and the black coffee and mellow fruit topped off the meal. He sat back, satisfied.

"Now we'll clear this mess," Tod said, "and while you're washing the dishes I'll start a couple of apple pies for dinner."

"Can you bake pies?" Dave asked, surprise in his voice.

"Sure thing. You haven't tasted anything until you sink your teeth into one of my deep-dish apple pies. The Tod Palmer Apple Pie, it's called—famous from coast to coast."

"I can hardly wait." Dave grinned as he donned an apron and stacked the dishes near the sink.

There was a porthole on each side of the galley, and while Dave worked he watched the wooded shores of Bainbridge Island moving by the glass.

"Looks as though we're in narrow quarters," he said. "We're close to the beach."

"Yeah. We're in Rich Passage. We'll work topside coming out, and you'll have a chance to see it."

At Bremerton, Ensign Hoffman was waiting on the wharf. He and two other Coast Guard officers came aboard the *Gullflight* as soon as the boat docked, and then Matt Garland gave orders to shove off.

Dave got only a fleeting glimpse of the Navy Yard through the porthole above the galley sink. As the boat swung around for the return journey he got a merry-go-round view of the City of Bremerton sprawling on the hill back of the government property.

"It's certainly been an enjoyable visit," he said, as he plunged his arms in soap suds to the elbows.

"We'll be back some day," Tod said. "You'll have a

chance to see the city then. We've laid overnight here several times in the past."

When the dishes were washed, Dave returned to his brass polishing job on the afterdeck. From the open companionway to the officers' quarters he could hear the conversation between Ensign Hoffman and the first mate, Matt Garland.

"After you leave us at Harbor Island," Hoffman said, "you'll head north down the inlet on patrol. If you find the tide is with you, I wish you'd take a swing over to Useless Bay and see what's going on. One of our boats reported a light blinking there the other night. So far as I know there is no one living on Useless Bay."



CHAPTER NINE

WHEN THEY left Ensign Hoffman at the Harbor Island station of the Coast Guard, the *Gullflight* backed away from the float on the West Waterway and headed north again. As they passed the cluttered ways of the Associated Shipyards and the Todd Dry Docks, Dave smiled

to himself. Over the sandy fill he could see the tall whirly cranes at Northern just finishing the day shift. Somehow the humming industry of Harbor Island seemed far removed from the clean, polished decks of this trim cruiser. Dave settled back for the pleasure of the long cruise that lay ahead.

He was alone with Bill Taylor in the pilothouse. Matt Garland had gone to the after cabin to enjoy a smoke while he studied some charts.

"How do you like this job?" Bill asked.

"It's great," Dave returned, "only it doesn't seem like a job. It's more like an excursion."

"Most of us enjoy being on the water," Bill said, "or we wouldn't be in this game. The men in the Auxiliary are all yachtsmen, and if there wasn't a war going on we'd probably be out here cruising for pleasure."

"When I left the farm," Dave said, "I never dreamed I'd get in on anything like this. I have you to thank for making it possible."

"Forget it. You'll earn your keep while you're on board. There's a job for every one of us, and we want to turn in the best record we can."

As they were rounding Duamish Head, they crossed the stern of the *Kalakala*, the huge streamlined ferry boat that plies between Seattle and Bremerton.

"Quite a tub, isn't it?" Bill said.

"It looks like something out of a Buck Rogers strip," Dave said. "How large is it?"

"Nearly three hundred feet. It carries two thousand passengers and more than ninety automobiles."

"It looks like a big silver dirigible."

"It does at that. Guess there isn't any other boat just like it."

A gray freighter was poking its blunt bow into Elliott Bay as they neared the West Point light. Black smoke smudged from her thick funnel, and when she whistled for an island steamer the deep-throated bellow startled Dave.

The *Gullflight* was well out in the Sound, heading for the inlet. She was taking a light chop head on and her sleek prow cut through the water with only a slight rise and fall. Bill had one ear tuned to the hum of the engines below the pilothouse deck. They throbbed with an even rumble that spoke of power and speed.

"What are we doing now?" Dave asked.

"Eighteen knots. The skipper said to keep it down."

"Where are we going?"

"Useless Bay," said Bill. "Hoffman told Matt to swing in and give it the once over."

"That's a queer name for a bay."

"It's queer, but it gives you a good idea of what kind of bay it is. Shallow water! A boat that draws more than four or five feet can't use it. Even then you have to be careful of the tide. Catch it on the ebb and you're liable to get hung up on a sand bar."

"Is that dangerous?" Dave asked.

"No, but you might have to wait for high tide again before you could shove off. It's no fun waiting for a tide."

"How long before we reach Useless Bay?"

"About an hour, or an hour and a half at most."

Matt Garland came into the pilothouse with a chart of the Central Puget Sound area.

"Have you ever been in Useless Bay, Bill?" he asked.

"Yes," Bill said. "We went in there once with an outboard."

"This chart only shows five feet clearance. Four in spots."

"The chart's right. There's a fairly deep channel along the north shore that leads up to the end of the spit."

Matt Garland spread the chart out.

"Right here," Bill said, indicating the spot with his finger. "Deer Lagoon is back of the spit. It's nothing but a mud flat."

"Why would anyone want to live on Useless Bay?" Matt asked.

"No one does, so far as I know," Bill replied. "When we were in there we saw an old cabin and a run-down orchard on the slope back of the lagoon, but the cabin was empty. I doubt if it's still there."

"We'll soon find out," Matt said.

Dave made his way down to the galley and found Tod Palmer preparing fresh vegetables for a salad.

"Anything I can do to help?" he asked.

"Yeah," Tod said. "You can get that mayonnaise jar out of the cooler, and we'll have to have some spuds peeled pretty soon."

Dave exclaimed in surprise when he opened the ice box. There, spread out on a platter, was a fifteen-pound salmon.

"Where'd you get the fish?"

"Fellow gave it to me at the Coast Guard dock. He had three that he'd just caught. How would you like baked salmon for dinner?"

"Sounds good."

"Okay. Salmon it is."

When Dave had finished peeling the potatoes there seemed to be nothing for him to do in the galley.

"Better go topside for a little air," Tod said. "We ought to be off Scatchet Head pretty quick now."

Dave returned to the pilothouse. Matt Garland was at the helm and Bill was perched on the red leather seat that ran along the side of the wheel house. He had a glass trained on a rocky head of land that was rising off the starboard bow. He lowered the glass when Dave entered and said, "Want to have a look?"

Dave jumped at the chance.

"That's Possession Point off to the right," said Bill. "It's the southern tip of Whidby Island."

"It looks like a big island," Dave said.

"It's sixty miles long."

Matt Garland took his pipe from his mouth. "It's the

second longest island in the United States. Long Island, New York, is the first. It's one hundred and eighteen miles long, but that's where the similarity stops. There are more than four million people living on Long Island. I doubt if you could find four thousand on Whidby."

"Most of the people on Whidby live north of Mutiny Bay, or on the east side of the island," Bill added. "The beaches are sandy there. Only a few scattered families live on this southern end."

Dave trained the glass on the high wooded shores of the island. The gravel beach off Scatchet Head looked steep and covered with seaweed. Along the foot of the bank bleached driftwood was piled in profusion, stranded by the tides of winters. A few tall fir trees towered above the second growth timber around the shores of Cultus Bay. The underbrush was a thick tangle of nettles and wild berry vines. As far as Dave could see, the bluff was deserted. There was no sign of smoke or of human habitation. It was apparent that the people who lived on Whidby Island did not care for the sweeping view of Scatchet Head. The beach was not inviting, and so far as the land was concerned, it showed little promise for farming.

It was four o'clock when the *Gullflight* skirted Indian Point and Useless Bay spread before them, a large half-moon of water, gray in the afternoon light. There were no other boats in sight and at first glance the shores, too, looked uninhabited. But Bill Taylor pointed to a spot

back of Deer Lagoon. A thin column of blue smoke was rising from a patch of trees behind the spit.

"There's someone here, all right," Bill said. "We'll pick up the channel off Double Bluff and follow it in as close as we can to the lagoon. We'll have to use the small boat to get ashore."

Matt Garland slid the port door of the pilothouse open. "Come on, Dave. I'll show you how to operate the boom for lowering the dinghy."

Dave was a willing pupil. He helped right the 12-foot dinghy that was lashed to the deck above the trunk cabin, and he followed Matt's instructions for rigging the boom and swinging the small boat over the starboard rail. "When I say 'Lower away,'" Matt said, "you release this line, and play it out through the block."

Dave waited on the deck while Matt returned to the pilothouse. They had crossed the mouth of the bay and were moving along the north shore at reduced speed. Dave stood with feet apart, one hand resting on the mast guy cable. His trim cap was tilted on the side of his head, and the breeze whipped through the light tan shirt of his summer service uniform. Whether he was a sailor or not, Dave felt like one standing on the gleaming deck of the cruiser as it slipped along the shadowy shore toward Deer Lagoon.

Joe Allen was on the foredeck, waiting for the command from Matt Garland to lower the anchor. Bill had released the clutch and the engines were idling. The

Gullflight was coasting through the dark water, and only the ripple of the bow wave and the distant squawk of a gull broke the stillness.

Then another sound drifted across the quiet water of the lagoon. It was the deep-throated baying of dogs. Dave peered toward the patch of trees from which the smoke was rising, but he could see no movement, no sign of life. Yet he knew this was no ordinary barking of dogs. It was low, guttural, prolonged, and the stillness all around magnified the sound, gave it a vicious tone that rumbled like a threat.

Bill leaned from the pilothouse window and pointed. There, bounding over the driftwood in giant strides, were two Great Danes. Their tawny bodies were sleek and sinuous, like the bodies of two jungle beasts bent on some bloodthirsty chase. As they drew closer to the boat their howls increased in intensity, and Dave felt a tingling chill at the back of his neck.

Bill looked back and grinned. "Playful little fellows, aren't they?"

"Yeah," Dave answered. "They ought to be in a zoo."

Matt gave Joe Allen the signal and the anchor splashed in the water. After a short drag the hook caught and the *Gullflight* swung from her cable.

"Lower away!" Matt shouted.

Dave released the line slowly and the dinghy came to rest on the water.

Matt came on deck. "Joe," he called, "you stay aboard with Tod. Bill, Dave and I will go ashore. If we don't get back in an hour, you'd better start looking for us."

"You'll miss your dinner if you don't get back in an hour." Tod grinned from the galley port.

Dave got in the bow of the dinghy and Bill took up the oars. Matt Garland sat in the stern. They pushed away from the *Gullflight*, and Bill started rowing toward the spit.

The two Great Danes had taken up positions near the water's edge, and their howling sounded more like the roar of wild animals than the barking of dogs. Dave did not relish the idea of facing the dogs, but he tried to hide his feelings.

"Ever had any experience with dogs?" Bill asked, turning his head to see just how threatening the animals were.

"Not much," Dave replied. "But I have a hunch they're cowardly."

"What makes you think so?"

"They're making too much racket, for one thing."

As the boat drew close to shore, the dogs kept up their incessant baying and danced in and out of the shallow water as if they were eager to lunge into the boat and sink their teeth into the first arm or leg that presented itself.

The problem of how to cope with the dogs grew

more imminent as the boat slid toward shore. The Great Danes were growling and drooling, and the savage gleam in their eyes seemed filled with malice.

It was Dave who would have to go ashore first, and it was he who had an idea. "Bill," he said, "give me one of those oars."

The water was shallow, so Bill could pole the boat with the other oar.

Dave stood up in the bow and lifted the oar above his head in a threatening manner. Almost instantly the dogs drew back from the water's edge. Dave jumped ashore, swinging the oar high in the air. The dogs stopped their barking and backed toward the driftwood, surly growls rumbling in their throats. They kept their eyes on Dave, like lions in a cage watching a trainer. The minute he lowered the oar, their growls changed to deep, hollow roars, and the sinews in their sides twitched for the leap. But when he raised the oar again, they drew back.

Matt Garland and Bill pulled the boat up on the beach, watching the dogs as they worked.

"What'd I tell you," Dave called. "They're yellow."

"Keep that oar in the air anyway," Bill admonished. "I don't want to take any chances."

The three men started down the beach, and Dave kept the oar over his shoulder like a rifle. The dogs followed a short distance behind, leaping from log to log, and stopping only to voice their displeasure at this intrusion.

The men followed the spit to where it joined the

mainland and there they found a trail, overgrown with brush, that seemed to lead toward the column of smoke. The dogs took a short-cut through the tangle of high swamp grass that bordered the lagoon, and when the men broke into the clearing under the unpruned orchard, the animals confronted them again, barking as viciously as before. Dave swung the oar, slapping the branches of a gnarled apple tree above his head, and once more the dogs withdrew, growling savagely.

It was then that they saw the old man. He came hobbling out of the cabin, a crutch under his left arm.

"Wolf! Zev!" he shouted in a high, cracked voice. "Get back, you old fools. Stop that noise! Can't you see we have visitors?"

As he approached he waved the crutch over his head and the dogs backed up just as they had done when Dave waved the oar.

"You had the right technique." Bill grinned. "They're evidently used to having a club waved at them."

Dave noticed that the old man seemed to hobble just as well without the crutch as he did when he had it under his arm. He was wearing shabby clothes and shoes that needed mending. His face was slender, with hollow cheeks, and his eyes were dark caverns under gray bushy brows. There was something hypnotic about his eyes, and though he made a pretense of being friendly, Dave had a feeling that he could be as savage as the dogs that milled behind him. As he drew near he managed a tooth-

less smile, and resting on his crutch he gave an ingratiating little bow to each of the men.

"Saw you coming," he said. "Hoped you'd stop. Seldom we get visitors here. Wolf and Zev, they don't have no manners. But they're harmless. Won't you come in? Make yourselves to home?"

"Thanks," Matt Garland answered for the trio. "We're from the Coast Guard patrol. Making a routine check-up."

"Pleased to meet you," the old man said. "My name's Gig. Mister Gig. Pleased to meet you. It ain't often we get visitors. Please look around. We haven't much to show you. We live simple. Wolf, Zev, and me, we live simple."

Matt and Dave looked through the open door. Mister Gig was right. Dave could hardly imagine any more simple living than this. The cabin was furnished with a bare table, an iron bedstead flecked with rust where the enamel had chipped off, an old fashioned wood cook stove, and a rocking chair that had been mended with bailing wire. The only unexpected thing in the room was a pair of field glasses that hung from a nail on the wall.

"What do you do for a living, Mister Gig?" Matt asked.

"Living? What do we do for a living? We make flies. We make salmon plugs. We make spinners. Haven't you heard of Mister Gig spinners? Would you like to see our workshop?"

"Yes," Matt said. "Sounds mighty interesting."

"Come this way. Come this way."

Mister Gig led them to a tumble-down shed back of the cabin. The door had rusted off the hinges, but it could be opened simply by picking it up and setting it to one side.

Dave and Bill and Matt walked into Mister Gig's workshop. Several rickety tables were littered with trout flies, brightly painted salmon plugs and polished brass trolling spoons.

"We pick up a dollar here, fifty cents there," Mister Gig said. "The summer people at Holmes Harbor and Sandy Point, they buy our things. But we live simple."

"Don't you get lonely, here, on Useless Bay?" Bill asked.

"Lonely? We never get lonely. We have friends. We have friends on the lagoon. We have friends in the woods. Are you ever lonely in the city, without friends?"

The unexpected question surprised Bill. He grinned. "I guess so—never thought of it, much."

Dave and Bill exchanged glances that told plainer than words that they thought Mister Gig was a little bit cracked in the head.

As they left the shed Mister Gig carefully replaced the door in the space that had been provided for it. Then he said, "Won't you come in? Won't you stay awhile?"

"No, thanks," Matt said. "We'll have to be on our way. Have you had any visitors lately, Mister Gig?"

"Visitors? Hardly call him a visitor," Mister Gig said. "Fellow came in here 'bout dusk not long ago. Hardly call him a visitor. Had a little cabin boat. Didn't follow the channel like you did. Got hung up on a sand bar, an' had to wait the tide. Didn't come ashore. Guess Wolf and Zev scared him off. Fussed 'round most all night with a lantern. Fisherman, I guess."

Matt looked at Bill. Evidently that accounted for the blinking light reported by the patrol.

"Thanks a lot," Matt said. "We'll come and see you again some day, Mister Gig."

"Do that," Mister Gig nodded, his pinched face contorted in a smile. "Wolf and Zev and me like visitors. Don't we, Wolf?"

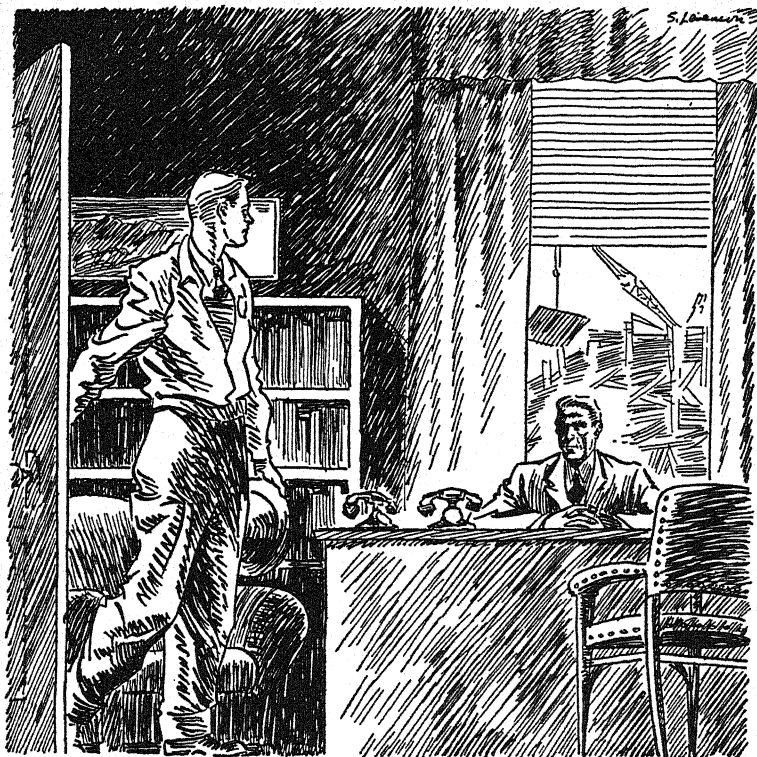
Wolf answered with a guttural snarl that was far from an invitation to return.

Wolf and Zev followed the men back to the shore, growling at their heels, and as the boat pulled a safe distance away and the threat of the oar was removed, they broke into a savage howl that seemed even more ominous than their reception.

Back on the *Gullflight*, Matt Garland made his entry in the log:

July 15—Investigated blinking light reported on Useless Bay. Found it to be stranded fisherman with lantern. Mister Gig, only inhabitant, simple-minded, but seemingly harmless. Makes living selling fishing gear.

Dusk was settling over the Olympic Mountains as the *Gullflight* proceeded on its way. Useless Bay, a dim crescent of dark water in the gathering twilight, dropped rapidly astern.



CHAPTER TEN

WHEN DAVE returned to his job on Monday it seemed to him that he had been away for a month. After leaving Useless Bay the *Gullflight* had cruised beyond Marrowstone Point, and the crew had spent the night on Discovery Bay. The following day they had touched at

Port Angeles and then the long trip back to Seattle had begun.

It had been interesting coming down the inlet, but not too comfortable. A storm had built up back of the Olympics and dark carbon-blue clouds hung low over the foothills. Thunder and lightning had filled the sky above Foulweather Bluff, and the *Gullflight* had tossed and pitched her way across open water to the protection of the Ballard Locks. But with evening the storm had passed, and stars were breaking through the clouds when the cruiser finally nosed into the slip on Portage Bay. Dave had completed his first patrol with the Coast Guard Auxiliary.

Now, back in the mold loft, laying out frames with Frisco and the other loftsmen, life had suddenly become hum-drum. Dave's hands moved mechanically, and he lifted frames and sorted them like an automaton. His mind was miles away, riding out the storm on the after-deck of the *Gullflight*.

"What's eatin' you?" Frisco growled.

"Nothing." Dave grinned. "I was just thinking."

"Thinkin'?" Frisco looked scornful. "You ain't gettin' paid for thinkin'. Let the brains do the thinkin'. All you got to do is work."

"Do you get fired if you think?"

"That all depends. If you want to think, do it on your own time. We got a job to do."

"But I wasn't thinking about anything that would

hinder my work. If I'm ever going to get a loftsmen's pay, I'll have to use my head."

"That's the trouble with you," Frisco said. "You're gettin' to be a loftsmen too fast. Some of the boys around here don't like it. It takes time to be a good loftsmen. Gust Larsen spent thirty years learnin' his trade."

"But Gust is a foreman," Dave said. "He must have been a good loftsmen long ago."

"Yeah. But he didn't get to the top till this war broke out. Two years ago Gust was workin' on a fishin' boat, just makin' enough to keep his family goin'. Then all of a sudden he's needed. When this plant opened, a good loftsmen was plenty hard to find. Gust knows what it's all about, so they make him foreman. Experience ain't no good unless you can put it to use. It took Gust thirty years to cash in on what he knows about boat buildin'."

"Maybe it will take me thirty years."

Frisco rubbed his calloused hand across his unshaven chin. "I'm afraid it won't."

That night Dave ate lunch with Jeff Robinson and Hal. Hal had become quite friendly since the fight on the outfitting dock, and he had joined them frequently during the half hour break in the swing shift. Both Hal and Jeff Robinson wanted to know about the cruise of the *Gullflight*, and Dave told them of his experience.

"Pretty lucky," Hal said. "I'd give a lot to make a trip on a boat like that."

"And you didn't get seasick?" Jeff Robinson asked.

"According to all the rules you should have been hanging over the rail. That's what's supposed to happen to farm boys who go to sea."

"It didn't happen to me." Dave grinned. "I'll admit I expected it. I was a little disappointed."

"Disappointed?" Hal blinked. "Disappointed at not getting seasick?"

"Sure."

"You've got a cracked bearing. You better let Jeff give you an overhaul."

Jeff Robinson left early because of the precision job he wanted to finish. Hal tilted back against the tool shed, and closed his eyes.

"Think I'll take a little snooze," he said. "Didn't get much sleep last night. Wake me if I sleep through the whistle."

Dave nodded. He took a small book from his pocket and opened it to a page he had marked with a strip of newspaper. Though the light was not good, he could see the printed words on the page. This book was an investment he had made only the week before. He had seen it in a bookstore window, and the bright leather binding had caught his attention. When he had read the title he could not resist the temptation to purchase it. This was the first day he had brought the book to work with him, and this was the opportunity he had hoped for—a few minutes during his lunch time to read.

But his concentration on the printed page did not last

long. It was interrupted by the approach of a man whom Dave recognized at once—Judson Taylor, general manager of the Northern Shipyards. He was dressed in a dark business suit and a gray hat and he walked with a determined step, like a man with some definite objective in mind. Though five hundred workmen were eating their lunches along the outfitting dock, he looked neither to right nor left. This was one of his infrequent appearances in the yards, Dave judged, from the hush of conversation, the focusing of eyes, the sudden, charged atmosphere along the dock. It was almost as if these workingmen feared Judson Taylor. But Dave could see nothing to fear in him. He looked distinguished, and the qualities he radiated were to his credit. He had built this shipyard from a sand-dune. He had laughed at obstacles that would have stumped lesser minds. He had driven his men at a feverish pace—racing against time—to see a dream rise.

Dave nudged Hal as Judson Taylor passed. Hal opened his eyes, blinked.

“Do you know that man?” Dave asked, in lowered tones.

Hal looked at Judson Taylor. “Sure I know him,” he said. “I’ve seen his picture in the papers. That’s Taylor.”

They watched the general manager as he continued down the dock and disappeared beyond the pipe shed.

“He’s the brains of this outfit,” Hal said. “They say if Taylor likes a man he’ll go all-out for him. He doesn’t

care a whoop about seniority or anything else. If he figures a man is the right one for a job, swish—that man is sitting on top of the pile.”

“Don’t the other men resent it—the rapid promotion, I mean?”

“What good does it do them? Taylor’s running the works. This organization is expanding so fast that it’s hard to keep track of any one man. If Taylor is sold, that’s all it takes. There are three foremen in the fabricating plant who are under twenty-four. Age doesn’t seem to make any difference.”

Ten minutes before the lunch hour was over, Dave and Hal made their way to the far end of the outfitting dock. Dave watched Hal adjust the regulator and straighten the lines that led to the bulkhead where he was working.

“Like to come aboard and see what I’m doing?” Hal asked.

“Sure,” Dave replied.

He followed the welder down a narrow companion-way and they ended up in a little compartment below deck. Hal pointed to where he was joining a vertical plate to a deck plate.

“We call this welding the overhead beam,” Hal said. “This type of joint is the hardest to make, for it calls for a steady hand. The welding stick is moved in a weaving or whipping manner that forms an elliptical circle. It gives the crater a chance to cool in order to keep adding to the welded joint.”

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"Welding has done a lot for ship building, hasn't it?"

"You're right. We couldn't build ships fast if we had to depend on old methods."

"I wonder how many linear feet of welding is required to construct one of these freighters?" Dave mused.

"You've got me there," Hal returned.

Suddenly Dave was conscious of a man standing behind him. He turned. The man in the doorway was Judson Taylor.

"What was your question?" Taylor asked.

"I asked Hal how many linear feet of welding was required to build a freighter."

"Hmmm!" Taylor said. He glanced down at the book in Dave's hand. "What are you reading?"

Dave lifted the book. His hand was trembling slightly. "*Leaves of Grass*," he said, in a weak voice. "It's by Whitman."

"Yes, I know. By the way, what's your number?"

"It's 8074, sir."

Judson Taylor's face was expressionless. He looked at Dave for a moment and then, without further conversation, he left as suddenly as he had appeared.

Dave turned to Hal. His mouth was hanging open, and his eyes were wide. "Whew!" he said finally. "Did you hear that?"

Hal nodded.

"What does it mean?" Dave asked.

"It either means you're sitting pretty, or you're fired."

At nine-fifteen a white-shirted clerk from the main office appeared in the doorway to the mold loft.

"Number 8074!" he shouted.

"Oh! Oh!" Dave thought. "Here it comes."

He walked over to the clerk. "I'm 8074," he said.

"You're wanted in Mr. Taylor's office. Explain to your foreman that you are to leave at once."

"Yes, sir."

Dave told Gust Larsen that he was called to the main office. Frisco, who was on a frame job nearby, noticed what was happening, and looked up as Dave walked toward the wide door to the mold loft. "Where's he goin'?" he asked, bluntly.

"To Taylor's office," Gust said, rubbing his chin thoughtfully.

"Is he in trouble?"

Gust Larsen did not answer. His mind was racing ahead of his young helper. He watched until Dave had passed from sight.

Dave walked along the high, gray wall of the machine shop. He cut across to the fabricating plant and followed the passageway between the first-aid station and the sheet metal shops. As he moved through the flood-lighted yards on his way to the main office building he was conscious of a strange, sinking feeling in the pit of his stomach. His knees felt weak and his wrists dangled at his sides with a queer numbness that tingled to his

finger tips. What if he had angered Judson Taylor? What if this was his last trip through the Northern Shipyards? What if he was to be dismissed, ushered out of the main gate, never to be allowed to return? Well, perhaps he had it coming.

Dave crossed the open space near the engineering building and entered the main offices. He walked down the long corridor on the second floor and stopped before the office marked JUDSON TAYLOR, GENERAL MANAGER.

When he put his hand on the knob he noticed that his fingers trembled. He took a deep breath, then opened the door.

A secretary was sitting in the outer office.

"Mr. Taylor sent for me," Dave said. "I'm 8074."

The young woman smiled. "Please sit down," she said, indicating a chair.

Dave sat on the edge of the seat while the secretary opened a private door. He could hear her talking. "The young man is here, Mr. Taylor."

"Send him right in."

Though the secretary's smile was reassuring, Dave walked through the door on uncertain feet. Inside the private office he found Judson Taylor seated at a massive flat-top desk. Three telephones and an inter-office buzzer were at his elbow. An attractive pen set occupied the center space, and at one side was a neat letter tray that matched the finish of the desk.

Dave closed the door behind him, and waited. When

Judson Taylor looked up from the page he was studying, there was a smile on his face. It was the first time Dave had seen him smile, and he saw even a stronger resemblance between Judson Taylor and his son Bill.

"Won't you sit down?" Taylor said, nodding toward a leather chair at the side of his desk.

"Thank you," Dave said. He gripped his fingers nervously under the protecting cover of his helmet, while the general manager tilted back, contemplating his young visitor. Finally he spoke.

"The answer is 194,000 linear feet of welding, which is the equivalent of a single seam approximately thirty-six miles in length."

"I'm sorry to have caused you so much trouble," Dave said. "It wasn't that important."

"But it was important," Judson Taylor said. "You wanted some information and you couldn't get it. You had me stumped for a while. It took three-quarters of an hour to figure it out when I got back here. I had to call in the assistant general manager and the shift superintendent, but we got it. That's a lot of welding—194,000 linear feet."

"That must mean a big reduction in the amount of riveting," Dave said.

"It does. We use 55,000 rivets in a hull now. If it wasn't for the welding, we'd use 900,000. It saves drilling a million and a half rivet holes."

Dave started to rise. "I certainly appreciate—"

"Don't hurry," Judson Taylor said. "When I overheard you questioning that welder, you had a copy of Walt Whitman in your hand. Do you like his poetry?"

"Yes, I do. I can't understand it all, but it interests me."

"I've made a study of Whitman," Judson Taylor said. "Despite his many critics, he was a genius. Some day I'll show you a first edition of *Leaves of Grass*, published in 1855, with type set by Whitman himself. I picked it up in a London bookstore. The British, you know, accepted Whitman long before America did."

The secretary entered and handed Judson Taylor a folder. He spread the papers out on his desk. Dave sat patiently by, wondering what he should do next.

"It says here that you were born in North Dakota."

Dave realized that the papers in the folder concerned him. He nodded.

"And you've been working in the mold loft since June 10th."

"Yes, sir."

"Do you understand what is done there?"

"Yes, I do. I can read the blueprints and interpret the markings on the loft floor."

"Fine. How would you like to learn some of the other phases of ship building?"

Dave's eyes lighted. "Do you mean——"

"I'm going to make you a contact man for the Superintendent of Supplies," Judson Taylor said.



CHAPTER ELEVEN

CURT KENNEDY, Superintendent of Supplies, was dictating a letter when Judson Taylor brought Dave into his office. He dismissed his secretary and turned to the general manager.

"I've found a contact man for you, Curt," Taylor said.

"Meet Dave Marshal. He's been working in the mold loft."

Curt Kennedy stood up and extended his hand. "Glad to meet you, Dave," he said.

"The same to you," Dave replied, shaking hands.

"Won't you sit down?" Kennedy motioned toward a chair.

"I'll leave him with you," Judson Taylor said, moving toward the door. "I think Dave will fill the bill."

When the general manager had gone, Curt Kennedy turned to Dave. "So you've been working in the mold loft."

"Yes, sir."

"How did you like it?"

"Fine. It's been swell working for Gust Larsen."

"Gust is a good loftsmen. I don't know what this yard would have done without him. But you'll find it quite different working in supplies."

"What will I do?" Dave asked.

Curt Kennedy tilted back in his chair. His shirt sleeves were rolled above his elbows and he locked his hands back of his head. When he spoke, the words came slowly.

"This isn't a job that you can learn in a minute. There are one hundred and fifty men in our department and all they do is handle and store supplies. It's my job to keep the system working smoothly, to see that the parts

and materials are received properly and that they reach the right destination. I have to keep in close touch with my men and that's where *you* come in. Your job will be to run errands, deliver check lists, bring back reports and learn all you can about the flow of material from the receiving yards to the assembly line. It's not easy work. You can make yourself invaluable on this job if you learn quickly. The last fellow we had looked upon it as just a delivery job and he made no effort to learn the problems of warehousing vast quantities of material. A good contact man knows where things are without being told. He is able to classify materials according to groups. For instance, some materials fall in the boiler group—others into electrical, ship fitting, pipe fitting, machinery, general stores, steel, transportation, and so on. It gets rather involved when we start breaking these groups down into sub-divisions."

Curt Kennedy paused and lit a cigarette.

"Think you can handle it?" he asked.

"I'll certainly try," Dave said.

"There's real responsibility connected with handling supplies," Curt Kennedy continued. "If the system fails it holds up work. If parts get lost or stray from their proper places, it could easily jam the whole line of production. One man's negligence might delay a launching."

"I can understand that," Dave said.

Curt Kennedy lifted a sheaf of papers from his desk and thumbed through them for Dave.

"We keep a perpetual inventory," he said. "Every day we can tell at a glance just what materials are on hand. We know how much steel we have in storage, how many feet of wire, how many half-inch lock nuts. Every item, large or small, must be available on demand. In addition to what we have in storage, we must know just how much material is in transit from supply centers throughout the country. When a freight train leaves Chicago with material to be delivered to Northern Shipyards, we know just when it leaves and when it will arrive. We have to be ready for it in the receiving yards."

"That must take organization."

"Organization is right. There are ten ships on the ways and each ship calls for thousands of parts. Our job is to have those parts ready and to anticipate where they will be needed. Supplies go through three stages while they are in our hands—receipt, storage, disbursement. If we fall down on any one of the three, we're shaking hands with trouble."

"Will I handle any of the supplies?" Dave asked.

Curt Kennedy shook his head. "Your job is to know where things are. You'll have a desk in my outer office, and I'll call you from there and send you to various parts of the plant. You won't need to wear overalls on this job. Ordinary clothes will do. However, you must wear a

helmet whenever you go into the yards. That's a company regulation."

"There's only one thing," Dave said, "that might interfere with my taking this job."

"What is that?"

"I've signed on the *Gullflight* with Bill Taylor for Coast Guard Auxiliary service. We're on patrol Saturday and Sunday."

"How did you manage in the mold loft?"

"I worked the graveyard shift Friday night."

"We can arrange that. No reason why you can't do the same thing on this job. I have an assistant on the graveyard shift. You could work for him one night a week."

"Thanks," Dave said. "I want to keep that Auxiliary job."

"I don't blame you."

It was eleven-fifteen when Dave left Curt Kennedy's office. There seemed to be cushions under his feet as he walked back to the mold loft. He was smiling to himself and he felt like whistling a tune. His fear that Judson Taylor would discharge him had been foolish and unfounded. He would not have to leave the Northern Shipyards. He was glad, for in the few short weeks he had worked here, he had grown to like the big, rambling plant and all that it stood for. This was his shipyard now, more his than it had ever been before.

Gust Larsen nodded his head when Dave told him of

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his new job. "I hate to leave," Dave said, "but Mr. Taylor seems to think it would be best."

"I understand," Gust Larsen answered. "You're a lucky boy, Dave. Once a man like Judson Taylor starts takin' an interest in you, there's no limit to what you can accomplish."

"Contact man!" Frisco grunted. "Sounds like a high class name for a messenger job."

Gust looked at Frisco. "Don't fool yourself," he said. He turned to Dave. "There are a thousand men in this plant who would jump at the chance to work in supplies. You have a real job on your hands, Dave, and I figure you'll make the best contact man Curt Kennedy ever had."

That night as Bill Taylor was driving him home, Dave told him about his new job.

"So Dad made you a contact man." Bill grinned. "You must have impressed him a lot. Dad doesn't pay much attention to the men. Not that he isn't interested in them, understand, but he just doesn't have time. He's usually rushing to lunch with some congressman, or dashing to Washington, or sitting in on some conference over steel. Say!" Bill said, darting a quick glance at Dave. "Just how did you make the grade?"

Dave told him of the question he had asked and of the book he had been reading.

"So you gave him both barrels," Bill said. "I'll hand it to you, Dave, you hit him in a vulnerable spot."

"I didn't intend to," Dave said. "I was afraid he would fire me."

Bill shook his head. "Dad wouldn't do that. He's a little gruff at times, but when he isn't snowed under with worry, he's a regular fellow."

"I could see that."

"About this new job. If you really want to learn about ship building, you're sitting pretty. A contact man gets all over the plant. It isn't like working at a machine, where you're tied down. Some of the men in this yard don't know any more about ship building than what's on the table in front of them. You'll have a chance to see the whole spread of the thing. It's big, Dave, and it takes brains to comprehend it all."

When Dave entered his room he stood for a long time gazing at himself in the glass. It was difficult to believe that these things were happening to him. Back on the farm his boyhood dreams had appeared so distant—so far beyond his reach. And now here he was, in the middle of the very dreams that had once seemed remote. Time, that had passed slowly on the prairies of Dakota, was moving with a speed that threatened to sweep him off his feet. He was like a boat caught in a swift current and he must hold the tiller fast.

He tried to minimize the importance of his new job, but the fact remained that Judson Taylor had taken an interest in him and Curt Kennedy had accepted him. Now he must prove that he was capable of the confi-

dence they were placing in him. To fail on this job would be the end of promotion so far as the Northern Shipyards were concerned.

It occurred to Dave that nothing had been said about wages on the new job. He did not know whether a contact man received more or less than a helper in the mold loft. For some reason Dave did not care. Always before he had looked upon salary as an indication of success. For the first time he realized that some jobs are more valuable because of future possibilities than because of immediate returns. There were times when Dave had felt that he was overpaid as a helper. If they gave him less as a contact man, it would not matter. He was training his sights on a target that had nothing to do with next week's pay check.

Dave undressed slowly. He decided that he would write a long letter to his folks the following morning, telling them the news. His mother would be pleased. Dave was not so sure of his father. His father had always discouraged him about leaving the farm. He had consented to Dave's departure only because of the times.

Dave remembered the square, severe lines of his father's face, the perpetual stoop to his gaunt shoulders, the blue veins that stood out prominently on the backs of his broad, soil-scarred hands. His father had led a hard life, and there had been little time for laughter after the day's work was done. Little time for kindness, either, although Dave could not recall that his father had ever

been unkind. Rather, he was a colorless, tired man, who went about his daily chores with a relentless determination. His life had been circumscribed by the distant fences of his sprawling acres, and he seemed to care little for what lay beyond.

His mother was different. She was always making plans, hoping, saving for the future. Secretly, she had encouraged Dave's longing to explore the silver rails that skirted the farm. In the evening, when the soft low whistle of the locomotive died in the distance, it was his mother who sighed and turned her face westward to where the sky was still bright from the setting sun.

Dave sat on the bed and untied the thick laces of his work shoes. Tomorrow he would wear his black oxfords and the blue suit he had bought for graduation. He would dress like the other men in the main office. No longer would he have to stand in the long lines that passed through the gates. He would enter through the main reception room now and he would carry his identification pass in the celluloid flap of his billfold.

Contact man! Dave wondered what Jeff Robinson and Hal would think when he told them.

Dave reported for work the following afternoon with a light heart. This was the day! He walked through the main office entrance and showed the doorman his pass. The guard pressed an electric button releasing the lock on the swinging doors and Dave passed through to the corridors beyond.

Curt Kennedy was in his office and he welcomed Dave cordially.

"I want you to spend a couple of days studying the organization charts and the plant lay-out. You'll have to be familiar with every office here, as well as the offices in the various buildings scattered throughout the yards."

He handed Dave a large sheet which carried the heading ORGANIZATION CHART, NORTHERN SHIPYARDS, and he showed him the desk he was to use.

"Go over that chart the way you would prepare a lesson in school," Curt Kennedy said. "I may give you a test on it when you're through."

Dave spread the chart out on his desk and settled down to the task ahead. All of the departments were listed on the sheet and they were connected with lines to the officials who had direct and indirect supervision over them.

Dave glanced at the top of the paper and saw the words VICE PRESIDENT and GENERAL MANAGER. He knew that Judson Taylor was the man who carried that title. Judson Taylor was at the head of everything. The position directly below him on the chart was that of ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER.

Beneath the second position, lines spread out in several directions to show the relationship of various managers to the assistant general manager. Dave read the list: Office Manager, Traffic Manager, Production Manager, Works Manager, Director of Labor and Public Rela-

tions, Purchasing Agent, Chief Engineer, Superintendent of Supplies.

Dave's pencil stopped on the last position named. That was where he belonged, somewhere under the Superintendent of Supplies.

Dave started to memorize the list of departments and officials supervised by the Production Manager. Soon he could repeat them from memory: Maintenance, Security, Plant Superintendent, Training, Manufacturing Progress, Hospital, Restaurant.

Under the Works Manager he memorized another list: Tool, Pipe, Copper, Sheet Metal, Mold Loft, Machinery, Steel Construction, Electric, Carpenter, Rigger, Paint. Dave grinned. Though he had been working in the mold loft for two months, this was the first time he knew that Gust Larsen was responsible to the Works Manager.

The chart got rather complicated when it was broken down further. For instance, under Steel Construction, he found the following classifications: Shipfitters, Hull Construction, Riveters, Welders, Chippers and Caulkers, Fabrication, Drillers and Burners.

"Whew!" Dave exclaimed, when he realized what a job he had ahead. He took off his coat and rolled up his sleeves. He'd memorize this chart if it was the last thing he did. He ran his hand through his hair and started to concentrate.

Two hours later Dave tried making a chart of his own without looking at the organization sheet. He missed only two or three departments. After another hour he could make a chart without a mistake.

"That's fine," Curt Kennedy said, when Dave reported to him. "Now here's a material routing chart for hull structure. You will notice that when material arrives by rail or truck it is delivered at the storage warehouses in the south end of the yards. It moves from there through the lofts to the outfitting dock, or through the fabrication shop to the assemblies, and finally to the ways. These lines X-1, X-2 and X-3 designate which direction the material will take."

Dave looked up. "I know something about this already," he said.

"You do?" There was surprise in Kennedy's voice.

"Yes. There's a man working in the machine shop named Jeff Robinson. He has taught me a lot about the flow of material. He's taken me into various parts of the plant to explain the different stages of construction and to show how the timing of supplies enters into the picture."

"What did you say his name is?"

"Jeff Robinson. He's an old fellow. Used to work in the shipyards during the last war."

"Why did he take this interest in you?"

"I don't know," Dave said, "unless he figured it might help me if I ever got a job like this."

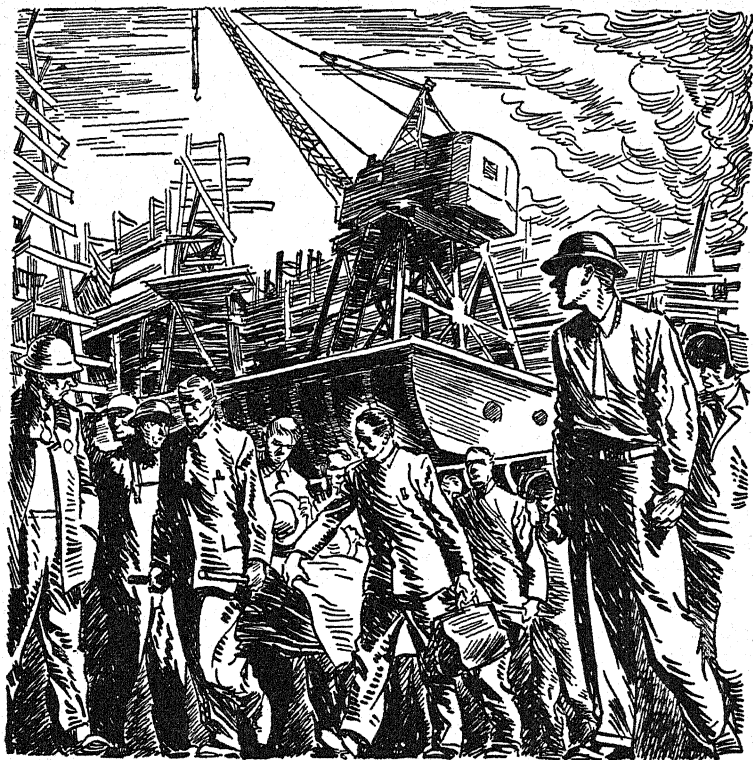
Curt Kennedy rubbed his chin. "A machinist, you say?"

Dave nodded.

Kennedy picked up a telephone. "Give me the Foreman Shipfitter— Hello, Botting. Are you still looking for a machinist to do some instruction work in the training school? That's good. There's a man down in the machine shop named Jeff Robinson. He might have the kind of experience you want. Wouldn't hurt to have a talk with him."

"Jeff will appreciate that," Dave said, when Curt Kennedy had replaced the receiver on the stand.

"I've never seen Jeff Robinson," Kennedy said, "but he's evidently a man with foresight. We need men like that in our training program."



CHAPTER TWELVE

DAVE HAD been on his new job three weeks when the first indication of sabotage was found in the yards where the steel shell plating was stored. Dave did not discover the underhanded attempt to slow down production, but he was soon aware of it in his department, for it plunged

the office of the Superintendent of Supplies into confusion.

He had just returned from the warehouse with a bill of lading when Wright, the foreman of steel storage, came rushing into Curt Kennedy's office, his face flushed and wild excitement in his eyes.

"Curt! We need you in the yards. Quick! Somebody has changed the strake numbers on half the shell plating in storage."

Dave knew that this was serious from the speed with which Curt Kennedy reacted to Wright's information. The Superintendent of Supplies hurried through the door still in his shirt sleeves. "Call Mead," he ordered his secretary. "Tell him to meet me in the steel yards right away." As he brushed through the outer office, he motioned to Dave to follow.

Curt Kennedy and Wright strode across the driveway toward the fabricating shop. The shell plating, cut and sorted for final assembly, was stored in an open yard just beyond this building. The two men moved so fast that Dave had to trot every few steps to keep up with them.

"When did you discover this?" Kennedy asked.

"Ten minutes ago," Wright answered. "We had an order from the ways for the port strake, *L*, Number 1. When we sent a Brownie crane to pick it up, we found that somebody had changed the letter *L* to a *D*, and the Number 1 to 11."

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"Are you sure it wasn't a *D*, 11 strake in the wrong place?"

"The paint wasn't dry," Wright said.

When Curt Kennedy arrived in the storage yards, men were checking the huge sheets of steel that were stacked on edge awaiting the time when they would be needed in construction. One of the workmen reported to Wright.

"All the letter *L*'s are changed to *D*'s, and the *E* strakes are changed to *B*'s. The numbers are all balled up. They even tried to change some of the port and star-board markings."

Mead, the assistant general manager, arrived hatless.

"What's up, Curt? What's wrong?" he asked.

"Someone has been fooling with the shell plating. They've changed markings."

Mead whirled to Wright. "Call all of your men. Get every last one of them here. We'll get to the bottom of this." He turned to Kennedy. "When did it happen?"

"Since the swing shift started. The paint is still wet. Whoever did this is quite likely still in the plant."

Mead's glance fell on Dave. "There's a phone in the yard office. Call the main gate. Tell the guards to let no one leave until I give the order."

Dave started for the office.

"And tell Ward, the head guard, to report to me at once," Mead called after him.

When Dave had completed the call he returned to

the yard. The officer in charge of the guards arrived soon after. Wright had assembled his men and they stood about the assistant general manager in a semi-circle.

"Someone has deliberately changed the markings on this shell plating," Mead said. "I've called you together to find out if you have seen men prowling around this storage yard who did not belong here."

There was no response from the assembled men.

Mead spoke to Wright. "Are all of your men here?"

"All but Withers," Wright said. "Have any of you men seen Withers?"

"Withers was here when the shift started," one of the men volunteered.

"But he isn't here now," the head guard said. "Withers checked out at the main gate half an hour ago. Said he was sick."

Mead and Curt Kennedy exchanged glances and Mead took the Superintendent of Supplies to one side.

"Call the city police," he said. "Have them find Withers. We must question him."

Kennedy spoke to the foreman of steel storage. "Have your men start checking every strake in the yard. We'll have to renumber all of the plates that have been changed. It's a good thing you uncovered this as soon as you did. The graveyard shift will have to take over at midnight if you're not through. I know what a job it will be, but we'll have to clear this mess up by morning or it will throw off the day shift schedules."

Dave returned to the office with Curt Kennedy and the assistant general manager.

"This is serious," Mead said. "We'll have to call for a close check-up in all departments. It means we have men in this yard who ought to be turned over to the F. B. I. If Withers is responsible for this job, that's just what we'll do with him. By the way, who is this fellow Withers?"

"A meek little man," Curt Kennedy said. "He works in electrical supplies. Never caused any trouble before and he's the last man you'd expect would do a thing like this."

"Well, he may not be guilty, but don't fail to have the police check on him. We can't overlook a thing. If we can stamp this thing out now we'll save the company and the country a lot of grief. I'll have a talk with Taylor tomorrow. We may have to round up all the questionable men in the plant and go to work on them."

When he reached his office Curt Kennedy had his secretary find the file on Withers. Dave could hear him giving a description over the telephone to the police.

"He's a small man, about five feet, two. Has a little black mustache and black hair parted in the middle. He's 36 years old and weighs 140 pounds. Lives in a rooming house on Yesler Street. Let's see, here's the address——"

Dave had seen Withers on several occasions when he had been sent to the electrical supplies department, but

he had never been greatly impressed by him. His eyes were set too closely together and his ears were too large for one his size. He was a mousy little man who always stepped aside to let other people pass.

Kennedy called to Dave.

"Take a run out in the yards and see how Wright is getting along. If he needs anything, let me know."

"Yes, sir."

When Dave returned a half-hour later, Curt Kennedy was just finishing a conversation on the phone. He banged the receiver on the stand and strode into the outer office.

"The police can't find Withers," he said. "They checked the rooming house and the landlady told them he hasn't lived there for a month. Didn't leave any forwarding address."

"He should be easy to find anyway," Dave reasoned. "Few men answer to his description."

"Right," Kennedy agreed. "And if he doesn't show up tomorrow, it's a dead cinch he's guilty. Changing those strake numbers was a crazy idea. I always thought Withers didn't show much sense and I'll be sure of it if he did this job."

"Wright has twenty men working on those plates," Dave said. "They've checked about one-fourth of them."

"We're lucky we caught this before any of the strakes



were moved. If we started sending mismarked plates to the ways for assembly we'd be in a real jam. Did you say twenty men were working on it?"

Dave nodded.

"It takes twenty men," Kennedy continued, "to undo the work of one crack-brained idiot. I want you to stay out in the yards with Wright, Dave. There might be something you could do to help."

When Dave returned to the storage yard he found Wright shouting at one of his checkers.

"Have you found them yet?"

"No, they aren't here."

"What's the trouble?" Dave asked.

"Three starboard strakes are missing. We have no record to show disbursement, but they're gone."

"They might have been delivered to the ways by mistake," Dave suggested.

Wright shook his head. "Not likely. They were marked for Hull 302. That's the job on Number 6 ways."

When further checking failed to produce the missing strakes, Dave decided to do a little checking himself. He walked past the fabricating shop and across the sub-assembly decks to Number 6 ways. He knew Towner, the hull foreman on this job. He would ask Towner if the strakes had been delivered for assembly. He questioned two or three men, but none of them had seen Towner.

"He was down checkin' the collision bulkheads 'bout eight o'clock," a welder said.

Dave started up the gangway that led to the second deck of the freighter on the ways. He climbed a temporary ladder in a companionway to reach the main deck. It was lunch hour and most of the workmen had left the hull. The cluttered steel decks seemed deserted, but Dave moved from midship to the forepeak and back to the stern, searching for Towner. The light was poor and he had to grope through the unfinished passageways of the superstructure. He clambered down a companionway to the well deck and inspected the deckhouse aft.

He found two men who had been working on a bulkhead in a confined area near the stern. They were quitting for lunch and they had uncoupled their torches from the acetylene hoses and turned the safety valves, shutting off the supply of gas from the manifold. Dave was standing near the taffrail when the burners climbed from the tank-like compartment below deck.

"Have you men seen anything of Towner?" Dave asked.

"Nope." One of the men grinned. His face was smudged with dirt and when he lifted his goggles two white patches circled his eyes, giving him an owlsh appearance. "An' what's more, we couldn't see him in that black hole if he was standin' two feet away." Dave moved forward with the two burners.

After they had gone the dark figure of a man slipped

from behind the aft deckhouse and lowered himself into the hull compartment that had just been vacated by the burners. He felt his way along the steel-plated deck until his hands came in contact with the acetylene hoses. He was familiar with this equipment, for his searching fingers found the safety valves and he opened the jets. The escaping acetylene gas flowed silently from the hose couplings. The man groped back to the ladder and climbed to the open deck, where he melted into the dark shadows and dropped as quietly as possible to the well deck.

The gas, drifting from the hoses in the compartment, mixed with the oxygen in the air and turned the tank into a time bomb.

Dave, who had stopped near the midship rail, thought he heard footsteps aft. He started back.

"Is that you, Towner?" he called.

There was no answer. He peered down into the well deck and could see no one. He decided that he had been mistaken about the sound of footsteps.

A short time later, when Dave left the hull to continue his search for Towner, a yard foreman stopped him as he was coming down the gangway.

"What are you doin' nosin' around this hull?"

"I'm looking for Towner," Dave replied.

"Where's your identification?"

Dave produced his billfold and showed his pass.

"You're out of place," the foreman said. "If you're workin' in supplies, you have no business on the ways."

"I was trying to check some lost strakes."

"Yeah? Well, tell that to somebody else. I have orders to keep people out who have no business here."

Dave left quietly. He searched through the assembly plant and along the outfitting dock, but could find no trace of the hull foreman. But he did bump into Otto as he rounded a corner of the machine shop.

"Why don't you look where you're going?" cried Otto.

"I'm sorry——" Dave started to apologize.

Otto stopped, stared at Dave. "Say," he said, "do you know Butch Kruger?"

Dave nodded.

"Have you seen him around here?"

"No," answered Dave. "Why?"

"I'm lookin' for him, that's why."

Otto strode away. Dave watched him for a moment and then decided to return to the main office.

Dave did not see the burners when they returned to their job on Hull 302. The men who had climbed out of the confined area near the stern post picked up their goggles and adjusted them over their eyes. Then, with torches under their arms, they descended the ladder that led to the death chamber. They were accompanied by a welder who had just received his orders to work in this compartment.

The room looked the same as it had when the burners left, except for the safety valves on the uncoupled hose. The welder set up his equipment, adjusted his face shield and struck an arc.

That arc grew into a blinding, flashing blast of flame. The explosion sent the three men smashing against the steel plates, shook the hull of the vessel and twisted the half-inch bulkheads.

Dave had just reached the main office when the muffled boom of the explosion rumbled through the yards. He whirled around, searching for flame, but he could see nothing. He hesitated on the steps, undecided as to what he should do. Just then Curt Kennedy came running through the doorway.

"Come on," Kennedy shouted.

In the yards men were hurrying from all directions. The fire siren broke into a rising wail. Leadermen were shouting, guards were running, and attendants from the emergency hospital dashed from the building carrying stretchers.

When Dave and Curt Kennedy reached the ways, a crowd of workmen were swarming over the sides of the vessel. The yard foreman who had stopped Dave earlier was standing on the cluttered midship deck, shouting orders.

"Check all hoses. Don't strike a light. There may be more tanks under pressure. Shut off all lines at the manifolds."

There was no fire following the first blinding flash, but acrid smoke hung over the ways. After blowers had cleared the contaminated air, men went down into the scorched compartment. They knew what they would find. No man could live through that explosion.

The bodies of the two burners and the welder were sprawled on the deck plates. The hospital supervisor took one look at them and shook his head. This was the last shift for these three men, and their fellow workmen lifted them gently through the narrow hatch and carried them down the gangways to the waiting ambulances.

The word spread quickly. Three men had died on the job. Two burners and a welder named Hal.

"Hal!" The name caught in Dave's throat. No! Not Hal! Hal couldn't be dead. Why, he had seen him during the early part of the shift, had waved to him. It couldn't be Hal!

Dave rushed to the ambulance and looked at the man lying on the stretcher. Then he turned away, tears welling in his eyes. This was the first time he had experienced the death of a friend. The shock dulled his senses and each beat of his pulse carried a strange ache from his heart. Suddenly he felt weak, and he sat down on a secluded grating and rested his head in his hands.

This was no accident. Hal was too careful for accidents. He had walked into a death trap and whoever was responsible had committed murder.

For the first time Dave realized the grimness of war.

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Hal and the two burners had died just as men were dying on the battlefield. The enemy was no longer a dim threat beyond the oceans. The enemy was right here, in this shipyard.

Investigation showed that other hose jets had been opened during the lunch period. It was only through luck and the shouted cautions of the yard foreman that more explosions did not occur.

When Curt Kennedy started back toward the main office, Dave followed, looking into the faces of the men standing about. They were all serious. There was none of the usual laughing and joking. As the full import of what had happened in Hull 302 spread through the yards, sober contemplation spread with it. Men talked in low tones. For a brief period activity slowed down and the ringing beat of hammers on steel was hushed.

As they walked through the fabrication plant, Dave noticed that a few of the men were still at their jobs. Others stood around in little huddles, talking about the explosion. At one table two men were buffing a steel plate as if nothing had happened. The larger of the two men was Butch Kruger. Dave recognized his helper as Otto.

"I see you found your man," Dave said to Otto.

"What man?" asked Otto.

"The man you were looking for."

"What are you talkin' about?" Otto said. "I wasn't lookin' for nobody."

But if Dave was surprised at Butch Kruger and Otto busily engaged in the fabricating shop, he had a greater surprise in store, for as they left the building they met Mead, the assistant general manager, hurrying to the scene of the explosion. Following close behind him was a man in a tan gabardine coat.

Dave gulped in astonishment. This was the first time he had seen Miller Goerman since that day at the Yacht Club when he had come aboard the *Gullflight*. Goerman was wearing an identification tag pinned to the lapel of his coat which showed that he had come through the main reception office and that he was in the yards on official business. Dave looked for the cowhide bag, but Goerman's arms hung free.

Mead stopped to talk briefly with Kennedy and Goerman waited impatiently.

"I called Taylor," Mead said. "He's on his way here. Did they find any more dead?"

"No, only the three."

"That's three too many."

When the two men had left, Dave turned to Kennedy.

"What is Miller Goerman doing with Mead?"

"I don't know," Kennedy replied. "Maybe it has something to do with insurance."

"The less I have to do with him, the better I'll like it," said Dave.

"Miller Goerman? Why? He's around here often. Friend of Judson Taylor."

"I wouldn't trust him any farther than I could throw a twenty-ton beam."

Curt Kennedy looked at his contact man, surprise on his face.

"You sound as if you've met Miller Goerman before."

"I have," Dave answered.



CHAPTER THIRTEEN

SOON AFTER Dave and Curt Kennedy reached the office there was a commotion in the corridor. Several men walked down the hall and entered Mead's office. They were talking loudly, but little of the conversation made

sense to Dave. He could hear Mead's high pitched voice rising above the others.

"All right. All right," Mead was saying. "We'll investigate him right away. Now how do you know—" The door to the assistant general manager's office closed, muffling the voices and leaving the sentence unfinished.

Curt Kennedy left his desk and came into the outer office. "What kind of a parade was that?" he asked.

"I don't know," Dave said. "Sounded like an argument. They're evidently going to investigate someone."

"I'll go and see what it's all about."

Dave tried to concentrate on some pipe invoices, but he found the pages blurring before his eyes. When he thought of Hal the muscles in his throat tightened and he felt choked. He could hardly believe that Hal was dead. He was such a clean-cut, likable young fellow. It was not right that he should have to give up his life because of the vicious scheming of saboteurs. The company, Dave knew, would leave no stone unturned in its efforts to bring the guilty person or persons to justice, but meanwhile he wondered if there wasn't something he could do. Exposing these underhanded agents was serious business. It was charging a man with a crime that called for the death penalty, with conclusions that must be backed by proof. Well, he would keep his eyes open anyway.

When Curt Kennedy returned, his face was sober. He leaned against Dave's desk and looked down at his young

contact man. There were questions in his eyes even before he spoke.

"Dave, were you on Hull 302 a short time before the explosion?"

"Why—yes— I was looking for Towner, the hull foreman."

"What did you want of Towner?"

"I was trying to trace three missing strakes," Dave answered. "Wright's men couldn't find them."

"Did Wright send you?"

"No. I went without any authority from him. Why? What's the matter, Mr. Kennedy?"

"Something pretty serious is the matter," Curt Kennedy said, speaking slowly. "The yard foreman suspects you of having something to do with that explosion."

Dave slumped back, finding words difficult. "Me?" he said, bewildered. "The yard foreman suspects *me*?"

"That's what he's telling Mead."

"No!" Dave said. "He can't do that. Why, Hal was one of my best friends. He can't say that about me."

"Just the same, Mead wants to see you in his office. Powers, the yard foreman, is there, and a lot of other men. They're boiling over, Dave, and they want to question you."

"All right," Dave said, pushing his chair back and rising. "Sure. They can question me. But they're all wrong when they claim I had anything to do with it. They're all wrong."

Dave followed Curt Kennedy down the corridor and into the room. The eight men sitting around the conference table looked up. Mead was at the far end. Miller Goerman was standing back of the manager.

"That's him, all right." Powers was first to break the silence. "He's the fellow who was snooping around the hull ten minutes before the explosion. I'd know——"

"All right. All right, Powers. This isn't a court room. We simply want to ask Dave a few questions." Mead turned toward Dave.

"Mr. Powers says he met you coming off Hull 302 a short time before the explosion. Is that correct?"

"Yes, sir."

"What were you doing on board the ship?"

Dave explained about the missing strakes.

"But you had no business there," Powers interrupted. "How do we know you were looking for strakes? Nobody sent you for them. It sounds fishy to me."

Dave looked at the yard foreman. Rising anger mingled with fear in Dave's heart—fear that these other men would believe Powers.

"You're making a rather serious charge," he said.

"Serious! Of course it's serious. The death of three men in a hull explosion can't be anything else but serious."

"Do you—do you think I would do such a thing?"

"How do I know?" Powers glared. "I never saw you

before. All I know is you were on the boat with a trumped up excuse and ten minutes later——”

“But it wasn’t trumped up,” Dave cut in. “You can ask Wright, the steel storage foreman, if three strakes weren’t missing.”

“I’ve already asked Wright. Sure the strakes were missing. But Wright never sent you to look for them.”

A man who wore the helmet of the yard fire chief spoke. “I’d like to ask this young fellow a question. Do you understand the operating mechanism of an oxy-acetylene cutting torch?”

“Yes, I do,” Dave replied.

“Have you ever been employed as a burner?”

“No, sir.”

“How do you explain the fact that you know the mechanism of an acetylene torch and yet have never used one?”

“Jeff Robinson taught me how they operate.”

“Jeff Robinson? Who’s he?” the yard chief asked.

“He works in the machine shop and is an instructor in the plant training school.”

“How long have you been employed here?” another man asked.

“Three months,” Dave said.

“Where did you work before you became a contact man?”

“In the mold loft, under Gust Larsen.”

“What did you do before you came to work here?”

"I graduated from high school in June."

"What high school?"

"Fargo Senior High School, in North Dakota."

"What does your father do?"

"He's a farmer."

The door to the hallway opened and Judson Taylor crossed the threshold. "What's going on here?" he asked.

"We were just questioning this young man," Mead explained. "Powers, the yard foreman, saw him aboard Hull 302 a few minutes before the explosion and he doesn't have a good reason for being there."

Judson Taylor looked at Dave and his eyes sought an answer. "Is that correct, Dave?"

"I was aboard the ship, yes, but I did have a good reason for being there. These men don't believe me."

Judson Taylor looked at the men assembled around the table and his eyes stopped at Miller Goerman.

"What are you doing here, Miller?" he asked.

"I was in Mead's office when the explosion occurred. He asked me to go with him to inspect the hull after the men had been removed."

"Isn't this a rather late hour for you to be working?"

Miller Goerman grinned. "An insurance man's work is never done."

No one else in the room smiled. This was no occasion for facetious remarks. The grin faded from Miller Goerman's face.

"Dave Marshal has been a good, loyal worker," Judson

Taylor said, "and he would be one of the last I would suspect of sabotage."

"But you didn't see him snoopin' around Hull 302," Powers growled.

"No," Taylor replied, "but his presence on the hull isn't conclusive proof that he was responsible for the explosion. Unless you actually saw him tampering with the equipment, your evidence is purely circumstantial."

"Just the same, he was the only person on that hull who didn't belong there."

"Are you sure of that?" Judson Taylor asked.

Powers hesitated. "I didn't see anybody else."

"I feel that you men are wasting valuable time here," the general manager said, irritation in his voice. "If any real evidence of Marshal's guilt is found, present it to me. If it sounds reasonable, I'll see that it is turned over to the proper authorities."

The meeting broke up and Dave accompanied Judson Taylor to his office. He had a feeling that some of the men were not satisfied with this turn of events. Powers, in particular, for the yard foreman walked down the hall still talking in a loud tone.

"It's too bad this had to happen," Judson Taylor said. "I'm convinced you had nothing to do with it, Dave, but when a man like Powers gets a notion in his head, words are not enough to change his mind. In times of stress some men are incapable of calm reasoning."

"If we could find the real saboteurs," Dave said, "per-

haps Powers would realize that he had made a mistake."

"That's about the only thing that would convince him," Taylor agreed. "This is not the first attempt at sabotage in the Northern Yards, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation is aware of it. We know of the danger in this plant and we've taken precautions to track it down."

"But if innocent men are suspected——" Dave began.

The ghost of a smile appeared on Taylor's face. "Don't worry. A careful investigation will be made. The F. B. I. never breaks a case until it is absolutely sure. Then the G-men work fast."

When Dave returned to Curt Kennedy's office he found the Superintendent of Supplies sitting with his feet up on the steam radiator. He was staring out of the window at the flood-lighted yards and the big moon-like spots of the whirly cranes that towered beyond the fabrication plant. Dave stood in the doorway for a moment, waiting for Curt Kennedy to speak.

Finally Dave said, "Do you think I would do such a thing, Mr. Kennedy?"

The superintendent shook his head slowly. "No, Dave, I don't think you would do such a thing. But you made a mistake in boarding that hull without proper authority."

"I realize that now. I've never been in a jam like this before. It's terrible to be suspected of something as serious as this."

"Yes. It's not pleasant. But there's only one thing to do now."

"What is that?"

"Go about your job in the usual manner. You'll have to show these men that their suspicions are unfounded. It will be difficult at times, for Powers is bound to talk and the story will get around. People will look at you queerly and some may even make insinuating remarks. It will be a test of your character. It's one of those sink-or-swim situations. I believe you'll be able to paddle through."

Though the superintendent's words were reassuring at the time they were spoken, they lost their force when Kennedy was gone and Dave was left alone. Bitterness over the injustice of the accusation and a determination to vindicate himself shared his thoughts. There were moments when he felt that he could not face the men who had accused him, and there were moments when the tendons in his arms tightened and his mouth was a straight, firm line above his chin. He would show them! He would show them they were all wrong. But how?

It was easy to sit here in the outer office and make a firm resolve, but it was another matter to find convincing proof. Dave sensed that he was confronted by a problem that might never be solved. If the saboteurs were not caught, the resentment toward him might grow until he would be forced to leave. The odds were against him.

In his mind he reviewed the events that had happened

previous to the explosion. The disappearance of Withers could easily account for the mismarked strakes. But Withers had left the yards before the explosion had taken place. Dave recalled hearing footsteps on the well deck of the freighter. At the time he had thought he was mistaken. Now he was not so certain. It was quite likely that he had actually heard someone and that the person who had walked across the well deck was really responsible for the explosion.

If that was true, he had missed an opportunity to catch the saboteur at work. He might have prevented the accident—saved Hal's life. The thought overwhelmed Dave, left him uneasy, jittery. He walked to the window and looked out across the yards.

The second story windows in the engineering building were aglow with lights, but the rest of the building was dark. That single row of lights made Dave think of a distant passenger train rolling across the Dakota prairies. For the first time he felt a touch of homesickness. Back there he had never found himself in such trouble. Back home the people around him were friends. They were fair and just. They never thought ill of another unless such thoughts were deserved.

Dave wondered about his mother and his younger brothers and sisters. They were probably sound asleep, perhaps dreaming of him and of what he had found at the end of the rails. They would not know that it was trouble—serious trouble. The distant muted whistle of

the west-bound train would never tell them of the broken hopes.

Bill Taylor was late when the shift was over. Dave waited for him near the main gate, and as the workers from the swing shift crowded through the turnstiles it seemed to him that there were many among them who stared at him. It seemed improbable that the story had spread so rapidly. He decided that he must be imagining things.

When Bill finally appeared it was obvious from his conversation that he knew nothing of the session in Mead's office. When they were in Bill's car, Dave decided to tell him. It would be better, he felt, if Bill heard it from him than from somebody else.

When he had finished, Bill grinned. "Don't take it too hard, Dave," he said. "You had nothing to do with it and that's that."

Dave felt grateful. Bill was like his father in many ways. Judson Taylor had accepted his story in good faith, and now Bill.

Dave left Bill's car at the top of the Madison Street hill. As he walked toward his apartment house he did not notice that another car had stopped near the end of the block, and that the lights had been quickly dimmed.

He entered his apartment and prepared for bed. When he was turning the covers back, a knock sounded on the door. He moved toward it, and with his hand on the catch called through the panel, "Who is it?"

"A friend of yours," a voice answered. "I want to talk with you a minute."

Dave turned the lock and opened the door. Standing on the threshold, a smile on his smooth-shaven face, was Miller Goerman.



CHAPTER FOURTEEN

DAVE FOUND it difficult to keep from showing surprise. "What do you want?" he asked, without opening the door wider.

"I followed you here," Goerman admitted. "I wanted

to talk with you about that little session in Mead's office tonight."

"I can't see that there's anything further to talk about," Dave said.

"But there is. I have a proposition to make. There would be no harm in listening to it. You can answer yes or no."

Dave opened the door and reached for a dressing robe. Possibilities were darting through his mind. It might pay to listen to Miller Goerman. It might give him some clue regarding the mysterious events that were happening in the yard.

"Won't you sit down?" Dave motioned toward a chair.

"Thanks." Miller Goerman removed his gabardine coat and tossed it over the foot of the bed. He took a pack of cigarettes from his pocket and offered one to Dave.

"No, thanks," Dave said.

Goerman scratched a match and cupped it with his hands as he held it to his cigarette. The light cast strange shadows in the deep lines of his slender face and flecked his dark eyes with pin points of flame.

"I know you think it strange, my coming here," he said, "but I couldn't help feeling that you got a raw deal down at the shipyards tonight. You were framed."

Dave made no comment and Miller Goerman continued.

"Powers is pig-headed, and no one but a fool would make such an accusation as he made."

"Some of the men seemed to agree with him," Dave said.

"Sure. A man like Powers can always get a few followers. He's the kind who would accuse anybody of anything if he figured it would save his own hide."

"You don't think Powers——"

Miller Goerman shook his head. "No. He's too dumb. If he tried to blow up a ship he'd get tangled in the fuse."

"Well, someone in the yards must have done it."

"Sure. And that's what we want to find out."

"We?" There was a question in Dave's tone.

"Sure. I have an interest in those ships," Goerman went on. "At least my company has. If anything happens to them before they hit the water, we stand to lose."

"Do you write insurance on the hulls while they're under construction?"

Goerman nodded. "As soon as they're launched our liability stops. That's what I wanted to talk with you about. I want you to help us investigate this explosion."

"How can I help?"

"You can help the same way other men in the yards are helping. I have several on my payroll."

"Payroll? Do you pay them for helping?"

"Sure."

"Does Judson Taylor approve of it?" Dave asked.

"He doesn't know about it. It's really no concern of

his. You work for the interests of my company and I'll make it right with you."

"But that hardly seems—honest."

"Sure, it's honest. There's no law against a man holding down two jobs at one time. We don't pay much, but we pay enough to make it worth your time. All you have to do is keep your eyes open. If you see anything that might hinder the launching of a ship, report to me by telephone. If nothing happens—well, you've earned your money, and that's that."

Though Dave heard what Miller Goerman was saying, his mind was racing ahead, considering possibilities. He was not interested in getting money from Goerman, but he was interested in getting information. He had suspected Goerman for some time. If he pretended to side with this man he might learn more about his intentions.

"Well, what do you say?" Goerman concluded. "Do you want to play ball?"

"All right," Dave said. "I'll be glad to help."

"That's fine." Goerman got to his feet. "I could tell you were smart when I saw you in Mead's office this evening. Those fellows made a bad mistake when they tried to hang that job on you. We'll show them what a mistake they made."

Goerman was smiling now and he extended his hand. Dave shook it and helped him with his coat.

"Remember," Goerman said. "Don't let others know

you're working for me. I'll have one of my men in the yards give you my phone number. You'll get a more detailed assignment later."

When Miller Goerman had gone, Dave leaned against the door. He stared at the ash tray where a thin column of smoke curled upward from a discarded cigarette. But that wavering smoke ribbon was not all that Miller Goerman had left behind. He had left doubt in Dave's heart, and the memory of a smooth smile and a glib tongue. Miller Goerman was playing a tight little game. Dave was more certain of it than ever. The game concerned the Northern Shipyards and it was crooked, or Miller Goerman would never have pledged him to secrecy.

Dave went to bed, but he found it difficult to sleep. His mind was filled with the happenings of the day. The disappearance of Withers, the explosion, the accusation had all happened within a few hours. The sudden turn of events left Dave restless and he tossed in bed until the sky turned gray with the dawn.

Withers did not report for work the following day, nor the day after that. The police searched for him in vain and the plant guards at the Northern Shipyards increased their vigilance.

"It looks as if Withers is the man," Curt Kennedy said, when three days had passed. "He did his little paint job and then vanished. It caused a lot of inconvenience,

but no real damage. But if we could get our hands on the other fellow—the one who tampered with the acetylene hoses—we'd have someone."

Judson Taylor and Mead had called a meeting of all leadermen in the plant and cautioned them to be on the lookout for any further attempts to slow production. Dave had attended the meeting at Curt Kennedy's request and he had taken an inconspicuous place at the rear of the large conference room while Judson Taylor talked.

The general manager of the Northern Shipyards had a compelling way with men. He appealed to their pride in workmanship, their spirit of patriotism, their love for their homes and for all that America represented.

Judson Taylor's talk made Dave think of his football coach back at Fargo Senior High School. Some of the "pep" talks in the locker room before a big game had carried the same ring. It had never occurred to Dave that training for football and training for ship building had anything in common. Yet here was Judson Taylor appealing for the same kind of team work that had carried the purple-jersied players of Fargo to success on the gridiron.

But this was no football game they were playing at Northern. It was a grim contest—a matter of life or death. Ships and more ships were needed if America was to survive. These men who listened to Judson Taylor knew it. They would welcome a little rivalry with other

shipyards to make it interesting. Taylor had stressed the fact that the Seattle-Tacoma yards had won the Navy "E."

"What does Seattle-Tacoma have that Northern doesn't have?" Judson Taylor had asked.

"Not a thing," a workman replied.

"All right. Let's show them."

Rivalry! Competition! That was the American way of doing things. But at the same time these men were conscious of a greater goal. There were no rules for modern war and no referee. Victory must be complete and final.

In the days that followed the explosion and the unjust accusation in Mead's office, Dave went about his work trying to convince himself that as long as the suspicions were unfounded they made no difference in his daily life. It was not easy, though. He met Powers one night near the rigger's loft and Powers looked squarely at him and refused to speak. Even Mead, the assistant general manager, seemed cool toward Dave when he entered his office on an errand.

There were other men, too, who seemed to have singled Dave out as one to be shunned. The fire chief and the foreman of the machine shop would have nothing to do with him. Had Dave been older he might have ignored such treatment, but it was his first experience with injustice and he hardly knew how to cope with it.

He tried to explain it to Jeff Robinson one evening as they sat on the outfitting dock.

"Men are queer animals," Jeff said, tilting back against the shed. "They want to be fair, but some of them don't know how. The mind of man is as unpredictable as the weather, but like the weather, it will change when the pressure eases. What do you do when a storm breaks, Dave?"

"I just wait for it to clear up."

"That's what you'll have to do now. You've been through a storm, but the wind is dying down. One of these days it will be clear sailing again."

"I hope so. I hate to have men look at me the way Powers does."

"He'll get over it," Jeff said and then, to change the subject, he asked, "How's the new job coming?"

"Not bad," Dave said.

He had been thinking of his job a great deal lately and he had discovered that his thinking was covering a wider range. No longer was he confined to the activities of the mold loft and the blueprints in Gust Larsen's office. When he thought of the plant now, it was spread out in his mind like a chart. It extended from the railroad spurs at the receiving yard to the catwalk under the stern posts of the freighters on the ways. He found it hard to account for this change in viewpoint. Before he had been conscious of only a small part of it at one time. Now he seemed to be looking down at it from above, a mental bird's-eye view that took in everything. He told Jeff Robinson of this change.

"That's natural," Jeff said. "You've spread out, that's all. Your job has made it possible for you. Not everyone can grasp the overall picture. That's why so many men have to spend their lives working at the bench." Jeff screwed the cap back on his thermos bottle and closed his lunch box. "I had a hunch," he continued, "that you were heading for something better than a loftsmen's helper."

"But I don't seem to be getting anywhere," Dave said. "I've run into more trouble on this contact job than I ever did in the mold loft."

"Trouble multiplies with responsibility," Jeff said. "If you were my age, it might get you down, but when a fellow is young and has everything to learn, trouble helps build backbone. This job of yours is an opportunity. You're coming in contact with the leaders of this plant and you can learn a lot from them."

"If Powers is one of the leaders, I'm not so sure——"

"Don't judge them all by Powers. I mean men like Judson Taylor and Curt Kennedy."

"And Jeff Robinson," Dave added.

"Get along with you," Jeff said, giving Dave a friendly push. "You're talking nonsense now and I have work to do."

Dave always felt better after a talk with Jeff Robinson. There was something about the old machinist's advice that gave him a lift. Though Jeff had never occupied a high-paying position, Dave felt that his life was far

from being a failure. He knew the technical end of ship building as few men knew it and he had a faculty for passing his information on to others.

Botting, the foreman shipfitter in charge of the plant training school, had called Dave to his office a few weeks after Jeff Robinson had been signed as an instructor.

"Curt Kennedy tells me that you suggested Robinson for the training school," Botting said.

"Yes," Dave nodded.

"I want to thank you. Jeff Robinson is a find. When we have to make machinists out of soda fountain clerks, and pipefitters out of automobile salesmen, we need men like Jeff Robinson. If you discover others like him, let me know."

As Dave walked from the outfitting dock to the main office he recalled what Botting had said about Jeff. Dave was certain Jeff Robinson would make the best instructor they had in the training school, and he knew he was fortunate to have received so much of Jeff's instruction. The information he had gained through his friendship with Jeff was proving invaluable to him in the supplies department. Whether the call came for dogs on the bending table, or a tip nut for a cutting torch, or a carborundum wheel on a rotary grinder used for butting plates, Dave knew just where to find the part and where it was needed. He had Jeff to thank for giving him the right start.

Yet no matter how capable he was, or how well in-

formed, Dave had a feeling that his new job had lost some of its attractiveness since the explosion. The shadow of doubt that he knew was shared by the men who had called him to Mead's office hung like fog in the back of his mind. It dulled his enthusiasm and left him sensitive to every sharp word, every frown that came his way. Though his real friends had demonstrated their loyalty, Dave seemed to be less a part of the plant than he had been before. When he walked through the yards now, it was as though he were walking alone and the workmen who moved about him were strangers. He felt lonely.

It was not a pleasant feeling and Dave tried to shake it off with other interests. He went to an occasional early movie and even attended a swing shift dance which started at one-thirty in the morning. But he felt out of place at the dance. The orchestra sounded noisy and the swaying, jostling couples seemed only to be pretending to have fun. The whole affair seemed artificial. It was the war, Dave decided. The war was turning night into day and nerves into taut, throbbing strings.

He thought of quitting his job, of going back to the farm, but he gave it up. That would never do. His friends would look upon him as a failure. There was no quitting this job. He would stick with it until he was drafted for service in the army. He would get all the education he could before that time arrived. There was no quitting this job until the war was won.

But when he tried to muster enthusiasm for starting his course at the university, he found that his anticipation of college had lost its edge. The spark that had flared so brightly when Bill had outlined his courses in engineering had grown dim. What was the use of it all? Work, loyalty, enthusiasm! One could be eager about work when the outlook was bright, but when the finger of suspicion singled one out, eagerness could vanish like smoke. Dave had experienced the change.

His thoughts, like the tide, seemed to rise and fall, and when they were at the lowest ebb some strange force drew them back to familiar ground. It was when Dave was thinking of quitting, thinking of giving up his plans for the university, that Butch Kruger stopped him near the crane ways.

"Is your name Dave Marshal?" Kruger asked.

"Yes," Dave replied, but he noticed that though Butch had asked a question, he seemed in no doubt about the answer. "Why?"

"Miller Goerman told me about you and the dirty deal you got up in Mead's office."

"Is Miller Goerman a friend of yours?"

"After a fashion, yeah. We got a little understanding, if you know what I mean."

"I know what you mean," Dave said.

"Good. Goerman said he had talked with you and that you were smart."

"I suppose that's a compliment."

"Well, Goerman don't often hand out compliments. It's all business with him."

"You work for Goerman, don't you?"

"Yeah. We *both* work for Goerman." Dave got the implication of Butch Kruger's remark. "If anything funny happens in your department, you're to get on the phone and tell Goerman."

Butch handed Dave a slip of paper and Dave glanced at the telephone number scrawled in pencil.

"Where does Goerman live?" Dave asked.

"You won't need to know that," Butch replied. "Just the phone number, that's all. You give him a ring when you got something to report."

"Thanks," Dave said.

"Don't mention it," Butch Kruger said, looking about furtively. "And another thing—you and I don't know each other, see? When I got something to say to you, I'll pick the time and the place for talkin'."



CHAPTER FIFTEEN

DAVE HAD never seen the launching of a large ship. Though five freighters had gone down the ways since he had started working for Northern, most of the launchings had taken place on the day shift, and it had not been convenient for him to be present. Two ships had gone

into the water on Sunday, but on both occasions Dave had been aboard the *Gullflight* patrolling the waters of Agate Passage.

On the Sunday after his conversation with Butch Kruger, however, his luck changed. When he reported for patrol duty at the Yacht Club, Bill Taylor greeted him with a grin.

"Aren't you the fellow who was complaining last week about not having a chance to see a launching?"

Dave nodded.

"Well, you're going to have a front row seat today," Bill continued. "We have orders to patrol Elliott Bay and to keep small craft clear when Number 302 goes down the ways."

"That'll be great," Dave enthused. "Front row seat is right. I've been waiting a long time for this."

The trip through the locks was made in the early morning, and though the day promised to be warm and clear, a gray mist hung over the waters of Salmon Bay and the lumber mills of Ballard. There was the nip of fall in the air, and the hint of autumn fogs which roll in over Puget Sound in September and October.

So they were launching Hull 302 today. The number brought a flood of memories to Dave, for it was on Hull 302 that the explosion had taken place. Dave thought of Hal, the young welder who had been killed in the explosion. He could picture him eating lunch on the outfitting dock, his welder's hood pushed high on his forehead, his

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dark eyes sparkling between squinting lids. Hal had possessed a sense of humor. He had been the first to laugh at a joke and he had played harmless little tricks on those who had worked with him. He had been serious, too, and he had shown a deep loyalty for his job and his country. Dave missed him.

There had been no trace of Withers since the night of the explosion, nor had the authorities found any clues to the identity of the man who had slipped from the deck-house of Hull 302 to open the safety valves on the acetylene hoses. Dave had told Judson Taylor of his hearing footsteps on the steel deck of the freighter and of his going to investigate, thinking it was Towner. But nothing had come of it. The man's identity remained a mystery.

Dave was still vaguely conscious of the part he had played on that eventful night, but as the days passed the false accusation lost some of its sting. Perhaps Jeff Robinson was right. Time would eventually erase the marks that had been chalked against him. He would live it down—show Powers and all the rest of the men who had met in Mead's office that there had been no grounds for the charges they had hurled at him.

As the *Gullflight* moved out into the Sound, Dave whistled at his work. The loneliness that he experienced in his apartment never accompanied him when he was sailing on the cabin cruiser. It remained behind, like some cast-off garment. Here on the water there were too

many things to fill Dave's mind, and the men he worked with were not strangers. Bill Taylor, Joe Allen, Tod Palmer, Matt Garland—he had spent many pleasant weekends with them. He had eaten with them, worked with them, fished with them and had shared their living quarters. They had taken him in as a partner and nothing had developed to mar the friendship that had grown between him and these men of the Coast Guard Auxiliary.

Now, as the sharp, gray prow of the *Gullflight* pushed through the lifting mist, Dave was scrubbing the deck above the trunk cabin. From the open port to the galley he could hear the loud, if not musical, voice of Tod Palmer. Tod was trying to sing *The Three Little Sisters*, and though he had the words memorized, the tune eluded him in spots and he improvised a melody of his own. He was washing pots and pans at the time, and Dave was not sure but that the clatter of the pans was more pleasing to his ear than Tod Palmer's singing.

Matt Garland grinned from the pilothouse window. "I wonder if he's really suffering that much?" he shouted.

"It sounds terrible," Dave answered. "Maybe if the skipper ordered him to wear a gas mask it would help."

Matt Garland laughed out loud and his head soon disappeared from the opening. Dave did not think he would take the suggestion seriously, but a few minutes later the singing stopped. Dave went below to inves-

tigate. He found Tod sputtering over the dishpan. He was wearing a gas mask, and his hair stuck up like the ruffled feathers of a rooster where the strap passed over his head.

Dave leaned against the door, doubled up with laughter.

Tod lifted the mouthpiece. "What are you roaring about?" he muttered.

"If you could see yourself——"

"It's skipper's orders," Tod said. "He came down here wearing a mask himself and told me there was danger of an air attack."

Dave was still laughing when he left the galley. Tod grew suspicious and looked into the pilothouse. Nobody else on board was wearing a gas mask.

"I'll get even," Tod mumbled, while he was preparing lunch. "I'll get even with Matt if it's the last thing I do."

For lunch Tod fixed a tempting dish of cold sliced tomatoes and creamed crab on toast. A large bowl of potato chips occupied the center of the table, and fruit salad added a dash of color.

The fun began when Matt Garland and Bill Taylor sat down at the table in the officers' quarters. Matt was evidently hungry, for he could hardly wait to start. But when he attempted to cut the toast under the creamed crab, his knife almost slipped from his hand. He scraped some of the creamed crab away and found not toast, but

a square section of a sponge rubber mat that Tod had once used on the drainboard.

"Well, of all the— Palmer!" Matt Garland exploded.

Tod Palmer came from the galley whistling *The Three Little Sisters*.

"Yes, sir," Tod said.

"Palmer! I could have you court-martialed for this."

"Yes, sir," Tod said.

"Why, I could have you—" Then Matt Garland grinned. "Here. Take it away. We're square, Tod. I forgot about the gas mask."

The *Gullflight* cruised as far south as Dolphin Point and then started back toward Duamish Head. The launching was scheduled for three o'clock and there was no rush to reach Elliott Bay.

The mist had disappeared long before noon and the day was bright. The waters of the Sound were as smooth as a lake and as blue as the sky. The ferry boats shuttling from the islands to the mainland churned white foam behind their cumbersome hulls. A four-motored Boeing "Flying Fortress" lifted above the bluffs of Fauntleroy, its olive-green wings testing the air for the first time. The giant bomber was just off the assembly line and this flight was the beginning of a mission far beyond the seas.

Dave leaned against a guy cable and watched the huge ship as it roared overhead. There was thundering power in its four mighty engines and a death-dealing threat in

the spread of its tapering wings. Dave wished that bomber luck—wished it all the luck in the world, for it was a vital part of the all-out program for war.

And in another hour he would see the launching of a freighter. He felt some pride in the fact that he had helped to build the ship, even though the brief history of Hull 302 had not been a pleasant one. Dave wondered what name they would give to Hull 302, for until it was launched the ship was just a numbered project in the yards. A ship on the ways, cradled and exposed, is a lifeless hulk, but give her a name and launch her in a channel that leads to the sea, and the inanimate mass of steel plates and beams becomes a vital thing.

The *Gullflight* was an example. When Dave had first seen the cabin cruiser, he had looked upon her as just another boat. But since he had become acquainted with her, he had learned to love the *Gullflight*. A queer feeling of possessiveness had grown up within him. The *Gullflight* was his boat, in a figurative way, and if strange feet trod her deck it brought a tinge of resentment to Dave. He knew that all the other men aboard the *Gullflight* felt the same way about the boat. She had taken them through calm and storm without flinching. She was a dependable cruiser, sea-worthy and ready for heavy duty when the going got tough. A man could ask for no more in a boat, and Dave was satisfied and contented whenever he served on patrol.

He sat on the trunk cabin and leaned back against the

dinghy. They were off Alki Point, the sharp jut of land that marked the apex of a triangular area in which fishing was prohibited. Matt Garland went off course to warn a salmon troller that he was out of bounds, and the *Gullflight* lingered in the vicinity until the man had pulled in his lines and had started back to the area that was restricted to daylight fishing.

It was two-fifteen when they rounded Duamish Head and pushed into the protected waters near Harbor Island. Dave could see the spreading gray buildings and the shipways of the Northern yards. The harbor was alive with shipping. Two freighters were nosing into the Smith Cove docks and the *Kalakala* was backing from her slip at the Colman Ferry Terminal. A tug boat labored out of the East Waterway with two barges piled high with gravel. Smoke from the industrial section drifted down over the water. Gulls wheeled and cried and the noise of traffic on the West Seattle viaduct was an unbroken rumble. Into this scene of activity the trim *Gullflight* slipped quietly, like a gray waterfowl gliding through the water.

It was good to be aboard this cruiser on the bay. Dave took a deep breath of the fresh, salt air. Summer weather on the waters of Puget Sound had agreed with him, for his face and arms were tanned by the wind and the sun. A person seeing Dave for the first time would have been fooled completely by this farm boy from Dakota, for his smart uniform and confident bearing gave him the

appearance of one who had spent his boyhood on these shores.

But Dave was not fooled himself. Though he liked Puget Sound, there were times when he felt out of place. He had noticed it more since the trouble on Hull 302. But on the *Gullflight*, sailing the wide spaces of the Sound, he was not troubled. It was only when the shipyards entered the picture that he was bothered. And the *Gullflight* was nearing the shipyards now. He could see the cables swinging from the tall cranes, he could hear the clatter of machinery, he could see the great hulls lying in the shipways waiting for the day when they would be ready to slide into the bay.

Hull 302, cradled in Ways Number 6, was ready now. Flags were flying from temporary guys and gay red, white and blue bunting was draped from her forepeak. Fresh paint glistened on her smooth plates and superstructure.

Hull 302 was an imposing-looking freighter. The great ship loomed above other half-completed hulls like some monster that had grown too fast. It was almost as if the freighter looked down on the other less fortunate hulls. Ready for launching, Hull 302 appeared haughty.

Dave glanced at his watch. It was two-forty. They had twenty minutes to wait. Another Coast Guard Auxiliary cruiser had taken a position on the east side of the ways. The two boats were to co-operate in patrolling the area. They were to warn all approaching craft that

a ship was about to slide down the ways, and they were to keep the water free of small boats.

Two tug boats hove to farther out in the bay. They maneuvered like twins, waiting for the huge hull to drift within their reach. As soon as the ship had lost sternway, they would make their lines fast and tow the freighter to the outfitting dock.

There were several pleasure boats drawn up with people aboard to watch the launching, and a number of row boats had come out from shore that others might get a better view of the event. The row boats bothered the Coast Guard the most. It seemed as if the men at the oars cared little for safety.

Matt Garland shouted at one of the men in a row boat who was edging in closer.

"Hey, you with the outboard motor. Get back there. You want to get drowned?"

The man scurried to comply with the order. Dave watched him intently. There was something familiar about him but Dave could not decide just what it was, although he had the impression that he had seen the man before.

Bill Taylor came out of the pilothouse and sat down near Dave.

"Everyone on shore gets jittery at a launching," Bill said. "Dad won't come down to see them any more. He gets nervous for fear the ships won't float."

"They always do float, don't they?"

"Sure, unless there should be an enemy submarine lurking in the bay. Didn't you read in the newspapers about the American submarine that entered Tokyo Bay and torpedoed a Jap aircraft carrier when it came down the ways?"

"Yes," said Dave, "I read about that. But it would be difficult for a submarine to enter Puget Sound without being detected."

"You're right. It's just the uncertainty of the thing. After all that work has gone into a ship it would ruin the reputation of a yard if she didn't float."

"I realize that. But what I can't understand is how they actually get the boat into the water."

"That's simple. Gravity does it, but the trick is in releasing the ship so that when she drops on the grease the pull on both the port and starboard sides will be even."

"How do they do it?"

Bill explained. "First they release the pelican hooks—they're really safety devices—and when that's done all that holds the sliding ways are two launching plates. One launching plate is on the port track, the other on the starboard. An experienced burner is assigned to each plate, and at a signal from the superintendent of the shift they start cutting the steel plates with acetylene torches. The launching plates are perforated with holes, and the idea is to burn the plates with equal speed so that the pull will be the same on both sides of the vessel. The

superintendent stands under the forward keel and calls off the holes as the burners progress. This keeps them together. The job is to sever the two plates at exactly the same time. When that's done, there's nothing to hold the ship back and the sliding ways follow the pull of gravity. The weight of the hull helps the process along."

"It sounds simple," Dave commented.

"It is, but it's also a neat problem in timing, because the superintendent has to signal the launching platform at the exact moment when the bottle of champagne is to be broken against the hull."

"Does the sponsor ever miss?"

"Sometimes."

"What happens then?" Dave grinned.

"One of the foremen, who stands near the stem, has a second bottle of champagne. He's in a position where he can't miss."

Dave glanced at his watch again. It was four minutes to three.

"Are they always on time?"

Bill nodded. "Unless something unexpected happens."

Dave kept his eyes on the great hull. He could not see the bunting-draped platform erected near the forepeak, but he knew that the ceremony of launching was going on. Workmen crowded the scantlings and visitors in bright clothes lined the docks.

At exactly three o'clock there was a creaking of timbers. Hull 302 trembled for a moment and then, as if

some giant had given it a gentle push, the massive hull started slipping slowly toward the water. Whistles blew. The men in the scantlings waved their helmets. A cheer went up from the crowd of onlookers.

The ship gained momentum as it glided down the greased tracks and the shining, cast-bronze propeller pushed a foaming curl of white water before it. The stern hit with a splash and the vessel moved out into the bay, riding high but on an even keel. Hull 302 was launched.

"What do you think of it?" Bill asked, his eyes glowing.

"It's great," Dave returned, feeling the same thrill that Bill was experiencing.

"And we'll launch three more before the month is over," Bill added.

"Three more?"

"Yes. It'll be a triple launching on the twentieth."

"Boy! That will be something. Three at one time!"

"It ought to win the production award for Northern," Bill said.

They watched the tugs as they edged in to take the two lines, but Dave was not thinking about the freighter now. He was thinking about the man in the row boat, who had appeared familiar. Suddenly, he straightened. The identity of the man struck him like a blow. He rushed to the pilothouse, calling to Matt Garland.

"What's bothering you?" the skipper asked.

"Do you remember that man in the row boat?" Dave asked. "The one you ordered out of the way?"

"Yeah. What about him?"

"Do you know who he is?"

"I've never seen him before," Matt Garland said.

"Yes, you have," Dave returned. "The man in that row boat is Mister Gig, from Useless Bay."



CHAPTER SIXTEEN

"YOU'RE RIGHT," Matt Garland said. The skipper looked at the boats that were still assembled to witness the launching, but Mister Gig's boat was not in the group. "Wonder where he went?"

It was Dave who finally discovered Mister Gig's boat.

It was a tiny speck far off Duamish Head. Mister Gig had evidently left the scene of the launching as soon as the ship slid down the ways. He had a good start on the long journey back to Useless Bay.

Matt signaled to Bill Taylor for headway and as the twin motors of the *Gullflight* took up the burden, the Coast Guard cruiser swung in a wide arc and slanted in a course toward the West Point light.

"We're going to overtake that old fish-hook mender," Matt Garland explained. "I'd like to find out why he was snooping around down here."

It took the *Gullflight* an hour to overhaul Mister Gig's boat. He had crossed to the west side of the Sound and they were off Apple Cove Point when the cruiser finally drew alongside.

Matt Garland leaned from the pilothouse window and shouted at Mister Gig. "Cut your motor. We want to talk with you."

Mister Gig complied and the two boats drew close together. Dave was on deck with a pike pole and he hooked it over the gunwale of Mister Gig's boat.

"What's troublin' you?" Mister Gig said, remaining motionless in the stern.

Matt Garland noticed several five-gallon cans that were piled in the bow of the row boat.

"What's in the cans?" he asked.

"Nothin'," Mister Gig replied. "They had gasoline in 'em, but they're empty now."

"That's a lot of gasoline for an outboard motor."

"They was empty when I got 'em," Mister Gig said.

"What do you use them for?"

"Oh, this an' that. I can seal 'em up and use 'em for net floats, or I can cut the ends out an' use 'em for cement forms. I was thinkin' of making some cement blocks to put under the cabin. Foundation's saggin' a mite."

Matt changed his line of questioning.

"What were you doing down at Harbor Island?"

"Sight-seein', I guess." Mister Gig flashed his toothless grin at Matt. "I went down to West Seattle to pick up these tins, an' a feller said there was goin' to be a launchin', so I just took a little time off to watch it."

"Where are you going now?" asked Matt.

"Useless Bay."

"Aren't you a little off your course?"

"I swung over here for a purpose. Thought I'd drop a line in the water off Point-No-Point. I was aimin' to get a mess o' fish for me and the dogs."

Matt, realizing he was making little progress, put an end to his questioning. "All right. Get along with you."

Mister Gig wound the cord around his outboard and gave the motor a spin. The engine sputtered and choked. On the third trial it came to life, and the small boat pulled away from the *Gullflight* and continued on its way. Mister Gig sat slumped on the stern seat like a hunchback. He did not look around as the Coast

Guard cruiser altered its course and headed for Ballard.

"What do you think of him?" Dave asked from the door to the pilothouse.

"He's a queer one," Matt Garland replied. "I can't figure him out."

"He didn't talk as crazily this time," Dave said.

"I noticed that. His answers were quite sensible. That time we visited him at Useless Bay he talked like a half-wit. I wonder what kind of monkey business he's really up to?"

"He must be harmless or the police would have rounded him up."

"Sometimes those harmless fellows are the ones who cause the most trouble," Matt commented.

The sun was sinking behind the Olympics when the *Gullflight* nosed into a mooring berth at Rusty's boat-house at Ballard. For the past month she had been left there instead of remaining on patrol all night. This saved the long trip through the locks and Lake Union to Portage Bay. One man remained aboard while the others spent the night at home.

It was Dave's turn to guard the boat. Matt gave him final instructions and Dave watched from the pilothouse door while the men climbed the stairs to the roadway and entered Tod Palmer's car for the ride to the city. When they had gone Dave made a tour of inspection. This was the first time he had been left alone with the *Gullflight* and he felt a deep responsibility.

There were other boats moored at Rusty's. They were mostly pleasure boats, though some were fishing craft. Rusty himself came down the long float to see if everything was shipshape aboard the patrol boat.

Rusty was a queer character. He was as round and solid as a capstan and his red stubble of beard and ruddy complexion were as distinctive now as they had been in younger days when he had sailed as mate on a wind-jammer. A black, short-stemmed pipe was clamped between his teeth, and a dark blue knitted seaman's cap clung to the back of his head with the tenacity of a barnacle. He was a man of the sea, cast ashore by circumstance, and stubbornly refusing to go farther inland. His life was here, on this beach, though he knew all of the islands and channels of Puget Sound like a chart. He made his living by charging modest fees of boat owners who moored their craft at his dock. He rented boats, too, but since the government had prohibited salmon fishing in the waters of his beach, this source of income had fallen off sharply.

But Rusty was not a man to complain. There was a war to be won and Rusty knew what that meant, for among his papers was an honorable discharge from the Navy.

"How's it goin', young fellow?" Rusty asked, when Dave emerged from the aft companionway.

"Not bad, Rusty."

"Mind if I come aboard?"

"Of course not. Glad to have you."

Rusty clambered to the deck of the *Gullflight* and made himself comfortable on the deck of the trunk cabin. Dave sat down beside him. The old sailor took a spiral tobacco pouch from his jacket and carefully exhaled his breath into it before dipping the scarred bowl of his pipe into the tobacco.

Dave watched him with interest. "Why do you blow into your tobacco?" he asked.

"Little trick I learned from a British seaman once when we were lyin' over on the Thames. Keeps the tobacco moist."

Preparing to smoke his pipe was a ritual with Rusty, and from the length of time it took him to tamp the tobacco properly, Dave felt that he got more pleasure from the anticipation than he did from the smoke itself.

The sun had gone down and the western sky was a canopy of gold and red. The mountains stood in purple silhouette, jagged and sharp, the last high barrier between the Sound and the ocean. The water was flecked with color from the sky and the twilight hush was broken only by the splash of a salmon leaping for a fly and the distant muted whistle of a locomotive.

It was peaceful and quiet here on the shore of Puget Sound, and Dave leaned back against the dinghy and drew his legs up so that he could lock his arms around his knees. It was hard to imagine that other parts of the world were plunged in war, while the spreading waters

of the Sound lay calm and undisturbed. Yet Dave knew, and Rusty knew, that if the Japanese were ever to invade the United States, Puget Sound would become America's first fighting front. The Japanese had taken Attu and Kiska, and those forlorn islands in the Aleutians were only eight hours flying time from where Dave and Rusty sat.

"Do you think the Japanese will ever get in here?" Dave asked.

"It wouldn't surprise me," Rusty replied. "Nuisance raids, maybe. The Japs would certainly like to get a foothold here, but they'll have to fight for every inch of this country. We got it the hard way and we're going to hang onto it."

"But a nuisance raid could cause a lot of damage."

"Sure it could, but there won't be any more surprise raids like Pearl Harbor. We'll be ready for 'em when they come here and we won't be pullin' our punches. I don't think the Japs hanker for a fight where the odds are even."

"This is a queer war," Dave said. "Anything goes. The more underhanded it is, the more Hitler and his crowd gloat over it."

"Yeah. It wasn't like that in the last war. Of course, any kind of war is bad business, but in 1918 the soldiers at the front didn't have to worry about the folks back home. This global warfare takes in everybody—women and children, young and old. You never know when

some peaceful city street is going to be turned into a battlefield."

"If those Nazi saboteurs had carried out their plans," Dave said, "they would have blown up Grand Central Station."

"That's what I mean. All of a sudden—boom! The war's in your front yard. Those birds would have thought nothing of killing the people in Grand Central Station, and Hitler would have chalked it up as a big victory."

"Maybe the electric chair will discourage that kind of sabotage."

"I doubt it," Rusty said, shaking his head. "You can't scare people who are insane. Life is pretty cheap in Europe right now, and I don't doubt that there are people in this country who would gamble their lives in an effort to blow up some of our important industries."

"And a few will probably get away with it."

"Yeah, but most of them won't. The F. B. I. has a pretty good tab on the men who might pull a sabotage job. The G-men are clever when it comes to tracking them down. They were out here the other day and picked up a fellow named Emil who worked on a fishing boat. Emil was always spouting about what a great guy Hitler is, and when they ransacked his cabin they found he'd been drawin' maps of the Strait and Cape Flattery and Vancouver Island. We won't be seein' Emil around here for a long time."

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As dusk was deepening over the waters the dark shapes of three large freighters nosed around the West Point light and pushed up the Sound toward Admiralty Inlet and the inside passage to Alaska.

"That's our answer to the Japs," Rusty said, pointing with his pipe stem toward the unlighted ships that were disappearing in the gloom.

When Rusty had gone, Dave checked the *Gullflight* again. He locked the rear companionway and the doors to the pilothouse, and then went to the forward cabin where he stretched out on a bunk and opened a magazine. He felt comfortable and contented. The water lapped against the hull with little sing-song gurgles, and the cruiser lifted and fell gently on the wash of other boats passing through the channel toward the government locks.

Dave started a short story, but it failed to hold his interest. He tossed the magazine on the opposite bunk and rested his head against the pillow. His mind was too busy to concentrate on the story. He was thinking of his family and the farm back in Dakota. The children would be tucked in bed by now. His mother would be sewing near the kitchen stove. His father would be in the rocker, his stockinged feet propped up on the wash bench, the evening paper spread on his lap. Reading the paper was a daily rite with him, as regular as the performance of his chores. He read every word from the weather report at the top of the first page to the last

classified ad on the back page. At nine-thirty the west-bound passenger train would whistle for the crossing at Hummock Grove. That would be the signal for his father to fold the paper and for his mother to pick up her sewing and go to the parlor window where she could see the lighted coaches as the train rumbled beyond the west section. Dave used to watch that train from the dormer window of his bedroom, and he smiled wistfully as the memory of it crowded through his mind.

His thoughts switched to the string of events that had happened since he had arrived in Seattle. The weeks of summer had passed in a quick, bewildering parade, and there were times when he felt he was moving on some magic carpet that took him places he had no desire to go. He wanted to get his feet on the ground. He wanted to accomplish something, feel security, realize some goal for which he might strive. His dream of the university had been an effort to form an objective, but since the explosion in the shipyards he had thought less and less of it. He still had his job, but even his job had lost much of its appeal although there were moments when his enthusiasm returned. The thrill that had come with the launching of Hull 302 had been such a moment. It was vivid in his mind like the memory of a lightning flash, but even these brief flashes were losing their brilliance.

Dave decided to have a talk with Jeff Robinson soon. Whenever he felt discouraged he sought Jeff, and the old machinist seemed to act like a tonic on him. Jeff, it

seemed, had more confidence in Dave's ability than he himself possessed.

He undressed and reached for the light. Perhaps sleep would give him a different outlook. He opened the ports and crawled in between the blankets. The gentle swaying of the *Gullflight* as she strained at her mooring lines soon lulled him to sleep.

Dave had no idea of the time when he was suddenly awakened by voices. He knew it was still night, for there was little light coming through the portholes. He lay motionless for a moment, eyes wide open. The voices came from the float outside and they were in lowered tones.

Dave lifted himself carefully on one elbow and peered through the port. He could see the dark forms of three men standing near the forepeak of the *Gullflight*. Two of them wore heavy coats and the third wore a short leather jacket. Their hats were pulled low and their faces were featureless in the darkness.

"This is the boat," one of them said. "You got that number?"

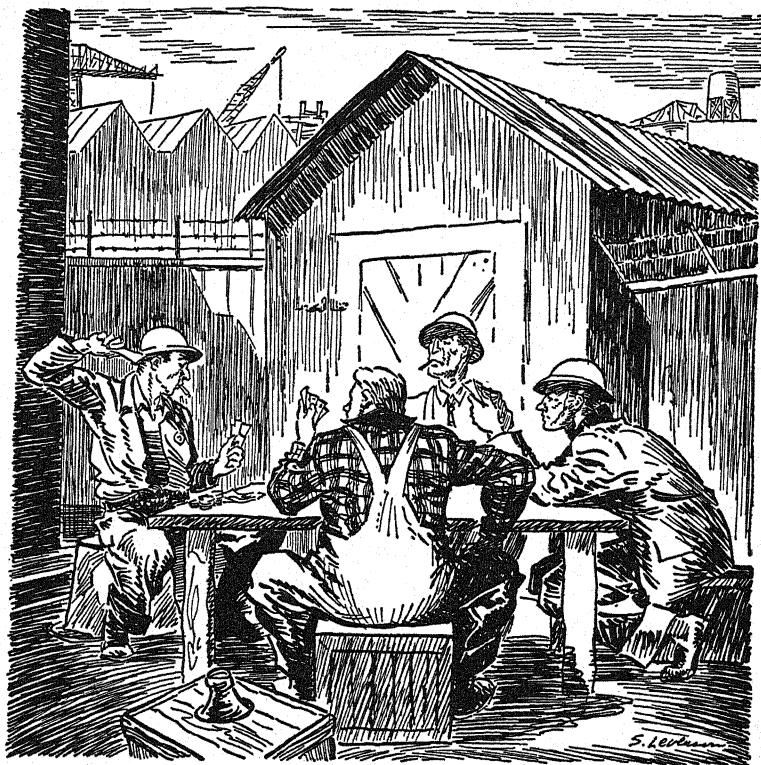
"Yeah. CGA-708. I got it."

"Better write it down. We can't have any mistakes."

"There won't be no mistakes."

"Okay."

The three men started back toward shore and Dave watched them as they moved like shadows through the darkness.



CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

DAVE DID not sleep well during the rest of the night. He took a service revolver from the locker in the pilothouse and kept it near his bunk in case of trouble, but the men did not return. Evidently their only intention had been to identify the boat. It disturbed Dave, for he could

think of no reason why three men should single out the *Gullflight* during the hours of darkness.

When morning came Rusty was up early checking the boats that had been left in his care. Dave hailed him from the foredeck of the cruiser.

"Did you see any prowlers around here last night, Rusty?"

"Prowlers? No. I slept like a log. What makes you think there were prowlers?"

"I saw three men on the float about two o'clock."

"Fishermen, maybe."

"They didn't look like fishermen to me," Dave argued.

"Well, they didn't bother anything. Things are just like I left 'em last night."

Dave did not tell Rusty of the strangers' interest in the *Gullflight*. He felt he should make his first report to Bill and Matt Garland. The skipper and the rest of the Coast Guard crew arrived at eight o'clock.

"Anything doing?" Matt asked, as he climbed aboard.

Dave took Matt and Bill Taylor into the pilothouse and told them of the three men and of the conversation he had overheard.

"HMMMM!" Matt said. "Took the number of the boat, did they?"

"One of them wrote it down," Dave said.

"Wonder who they could be?" Bill asked.

"Sounds funny," Matt said. "You're sure it was the *Gullflight* they were interested in?"

"I'm sure of it," Dave returned. "They didn't look at any other boat."

"There isn't anything we can do about it now," Matt said. "I'll include it in my log report to the Coast Guard Station. Let's shove off now. We have a day's work cut out for us."

The *Gullflight* spent Sunday patrolling the prohibited area near Rich Passage, and after an uneventful day they crossed the Sound and entered the locks on their way to the yacht basin on Portage Bay.

Evening shadows were falling when the cruiser reached its regular mooring. After the other crew members had left the boat, Dave lingered behind with Bill Taylor to see that everything was in order.

When the bumpers were in place, the bilges pumped out and the tarp stretched over the dinghy, Bill turned to Dave.

"I guess everything is okay," he said. "How about the refrigerator pan in the galley?"

"I emptied it," Dave said.

They were checking the after cabin when they heard footsteps on the wharf and the boat tilted slightly as someone came aboard. Bill stepped to the companionway to see who it was.

"Hi, Bill," a voice said.

At first Bill did not recognize the man, but he identified him as he moved closer.

"Oh! Hello, there, Mr. Goerman. What are you doing down here?"

"Could I talk with you for a minute?"

"Sure." Bill backed into the cabin and Dave made room for him. The visitor came down the companionway and seemed surprised when he discovered Dave.

"Sorry," he said. "I thought you were alone."

"This is Dave Marshal," Bill said. "Meet Mr. Goerman, Dave."

"We've——" Dave started to say, but Miller Goerman interrupted him.

"Glad to meet you," Goerman said, extending his hand. Dave shook hands, feeling rather silly. It was obvious that Goerman did not wish to have it known that they had met before. "I came to discuss a little business with Bill. Do you mind?" The rising inflection of his voice was an invitation for Dave to leave.

"Not at all." Dave moved toward the companionway that led to the pilothouse. He pulled the sliding door closed behind him, but not before he had noticed the cowhide bag that Miller Goerman had placed on the table.

Dave sat down on the helmsman's seat in the pilothouse. Miller Goerman's voice was a low mumble behind the closed door, and even if Dave had wished to eavesdrop it would have been difficult for him to understand what was being said. He thought of that yellow

leather bag and the trouble it had caused him. He thought of Miller Goerman's visit to his apartment and the proposition Goerman had made. It occurred to him that each time he had come in contact with Goerman there had been an element of mystery connected with the meeting. It was much like a stage play. Goerman made his entrances and exits furtively and he left behind a feeling of impending trouble. There was something ominous now in the unintelligible conversation that was taking place in the after cabin.

When Miller Goerman had gone and Dave and Bill were walking across the Yacht Club lawn, Dave could contain himself no longer.

"What did that bird want?" he asked, bluntly.

"He wanted to know when the triple launching would take place down at the yards."

"Why is he so concerned about the launchings?"

"It seems Dad refused to take out any more insurance with him after these ships go down the ways. He wanted to know the reason for Dad's change of mind and he wanted me to use my influence with him to swing some new policies."

"Are you going to do it—use your influence, I mean?"

"I don't have much influence with Dad," Bill said.

"In fact, I know very little about his business affairs."

"Do you think Miller Goerman is really interested in insurance?"

"He's been selling it for years."

"But it could be a sideline," Dave said. "He could have other interests that he considered more important."

"What, for instance?"

"Sabotage." Dave was surprised at the bold way the word slipped from his tongue.

Bill stopped, put his hand on Dave's arm. "What makes you say that?" he asked.

"Everything he says. The way he acts. The mysterious way he has of popping up at unexpected moments. But gosh! I couldn't prove it. I'm talking too much. Forget it, Bill."

They walked on in silence. Bill climbed in behind the steering wheel of his roadster, but he did not step on the starter immediately. He turned to Dave who had slumped down in the seat at his side.

"You know," he said, "there is something queer about Miller Goerman. He has a rather smooth way of getting information out of a person."

"How do you mean?"

"He said he wanted to bring a friend down for the next launching—some lawyer at his club who had never seen a ship go down the ways. He wanted me to get passes for them."

"Did you tell him you would?" Dave asked.

"No. I told him the triple launching was scheduled for two o'clock on the morning of the twentieth."

"On the graveyard shift?"

"Yeah. And I told him that because it was the first night launching at Northern, no visitors but the actual sponsors of the vessels would be allowed in the yards. I guess I'm the one who talks too much, Dave. I could kick myself all over the block."

"Maybe I'm all wrong," Dave said. "I wouldn't worry about it too much. After all, you've known Miller Goerman for years."

"That's just it. We've known him for years and he's supposed to be a friend of the family, but Dad is evidently losing confidence in him. I told Dad of your suspicions when Miller Goerman arrived on the boat from Alaska, but Dad only laughed it off. Just the same, he's refusing to do any more business with Goerman, and that means something. Now Goerman comes around and pumps me for information about the shipyards."

The moon was rising over Mercer Island as they drove up the Montlake Hill. The floating bridge across Lake Washington was ablaze with lights, and from the foothills to the east, air beacons blinked with monotonous regularity.

The following day when Dave reported for work, he found Judson Taylor in Curt Kennedy's office. Dave sat down in the outer office, but Curt called to him. Judson Taylor greeted him in a friendly manner.

"We were just discussing you," Curt said to Dave. "Mr. Taylor and I think it would be a good precaution if we had someone trained who could supervise any one

of the supply warehouses in case a vacancy should occur."

"Yes, sir," Dave said.

"How would you like to receive this training?" Judson Taylor asked.

"You mean—me? You have me in mind?"

"Yes. We are considering you."

Dave gulped. "I—I would certainly be glad to—to do anything you want me to do."

"It would not mean a promotion at present," Curt Kennedy said, "but our personnel turn-over is tremendous and we have to be prepared. However, it would mean that when the chance for a promotion comes you would be ready for it. You would be expected to spend at least two weeks in each warehouse familiarizing yourself with all the details of that particular department."

"I'll do my best," Dave said.

"That will be fine," Judson Taylor said. "You understand, Dave, that we are placing a great deal of confidence in you."

"I realize that, sir."

"Well, good luck to you. Curt will explain the details." Judson Taylor started to leave, but he stopped in the doorway. "About that other matter, Curt. Take it up with your leadermen and your supervisors."

"I'll do it today," Curt replied.

When the general manager had gone, Dave walked to his desk in a trance. He could hardly believe he was

being given new responsibility. He wondered what he had done to warrant it. Curt Kennedy followed him into the outer office.

"What's the matter, Dave?" the supply superintendent said, smiling. "Are you surprised?"

"I'll say I'm surprised."

"Promotions have to be rapid around here," Curt said. "Most of our key men were in other jobs six months ago."

"I hope I have what it takes." Dave grinned.

"Before you arrived," Curt Kennedy said, "Judson Taylor was talking to me about another matter. This is confidential, of course. He received a letter from Washington today. This plant is being considered for the Army and Navy Production Award, providing we get three more ships in the water before the end of the month."

"Really!" Dave's eyes lighted. "We'll make it then. Those three ships on the twentieth will turn the trick."

"There's only one hitch," Curt Kennedy said. "We'll have to weed out all the loafers in our yard. No industry receives the Army and Navy Award unless the personnel is working in a one-hundred percent, all-out effort to win the war. We have a few men in this plant who are sloughing on the job. Judson Taylor is starting a campaign to fire every man who is guilty of loafing. Only in that way can we win recognition for efficiency."

"I wonder if some of the criticism of time lost in the shipyards isn't justified," Dave said.

"Yes, some of it is justified," Kennedy returned. "When large industry has to be developed quickly there is bound to be some waste motion. I'm having a meeting of all leadermen and supervisors in the supply department. We're going to be on the look-out for work evaders from now on."

"I'll do what I can to help."

"You'll have a chance to help. I'm assigning you to the electrical supply warehouse starting tomorrow."

Dave's first week in the electrical warehouse was a pleasant experience for him. Curt Kennedy had talked to Canfield, the supervisor in charge of all electrical equipment, and Canfield had been co-operative. He went out of his way to teach Dave how to use the index that would guide him to the storage of thousands of parts, and he let him work for a short time with each of the men who were skilled in handling those supplies. Dave was given a free hand to study the inventory and to check stock against supply lists. He learned Canfield's duties and before the second week was over he was handling most of the routine in the warehouse office.

But it was during the second week that Powers, the yard foreman, happened to come to the electrical supply department to trace some copper wire that had been ordered. Canfield had gone to the main office and had

left Dave in charge. Powers confronted Dave, surprise on his face.

"Where's Canfield?" Powers asked.

"He went to Mr. Mead's office. Is there anything I can do for you?"

"I should say not," Powers returned, his voice indignant. "What are you doing around here?"

"Mr. Taylor asked me to work here temporarily."

"Oh, he did, huh?" The mention of Judson Taylor's name silenced Powers's tongue, but it did not keep the animosity from showing on his face. He started for the door.

"Shall I tell Mr. Canfield you were here?" Dave called after him.

"Don't bother," Powers flung over his shoulder. "When I've got business to do with you, it won't be in this shipyard."

Dave wondered if the last remark was a threat. It aggravated a sore that had almost healed in Dave's heart. It bothered him to have the foreman's antagonism continue, but he felt that there was little he could do about it. If Powers was a vindictive man, it would take more than the passage of time to change his attitude.

But Powers had succeeded in dashing cold water on some of the enthusiasm that Dave had felt since he had been sent to the electrical department. The following week he was scheduled to shift to the pipe warehouse,

and he shuddered to think of the reaction Powers would have should he chance to find him there.

When Canfield returned Dave told him of the yard foreman's visit.

"That old sour face." Canfield made a grimace. "Don't let anything he says bother you, Dave. He has a knack for minding other people's business."

It was on the last day of his assignment to the electrical warehouse that Dave was sent to find some insulated conduits that were used infrequently. They were stored far back on a dusty balcony behind huge rolls of asbestos packing. The index file gave Dave the shelf number and he started the search. It was necessary to move several of the asbestos rolls to reach the conduits. He cleared a narrow avenue to the remote part of the warehouse. A high, grimy window was the only source of light, and he had to peer closely to find the proper number. He was climbing to a high shelf when the sound of voices attracted his attention. The voices were coming from outside the window, and Dave thought that was strange, because the rear of the electrical warehouse was built close to a blind passageway that jutted off from the steel storage yards. It was unlikely that men would be working in such a secluded part of the plant. The passageway was there for fire precautions, mainly, and Dave's curiosity prompted him to climb on a box and wipe the dirt away from a small space on the dust-coated window.

He looked through the spot he had cleaned on the

window, and caught his breath. Four men were seated around a rough table they had erected of planks. Their helmets were pushed back on their heads, and they were laughing and joking as they nonchalantly shuffled and dealt a deck of cards.

Dave's mind flashed back to the warning Curt Kennedy had given him about loafers in the yards. He cleaned the glass more carefully and looked again. One of the men he recognized as Butch Kruger. The man across from him was Otto. He did not know the other two.

For a moment Dave wondered what he should do about it. Of one thing he was certain—he must tell someone. He clambered down from the box and started back for the warehouse office. He had forgotten the purpose of his errand, but that did not matter. He found Canfield checking an invoice near the wire racks.

"Could I speak with you a minute?" Dave asked.

"Sure," Canfield replied. "What's troubling you? You look as jittery as a colt."

"I—I want you to see something. Will you come with me?"

On the way to the balcony, Dave explained about searching for the conduits and of hearing the voices. Canfield was a big man and he had to turn sideways to get between the asbestos rolls.

"Climb up on that box," Dave said. "Look through that little clear space."

Canfield followed the instructions.

"Well I'll be—" he muttered. "Of all the dirty— Let's see, that big guy is Kruger. I don't know the man across from him. Torchy Smith is that fellow on the end, and the other fellow is a machinist's helper. I've seen him around the shops."

Canfield got down from the box and his mouth was a hard line across his square jaw.

"Can you imagine that? Sneakin' away to play cards on company time. Drawin' down pay while American soldiers—why, the——"

Canfield plowed through the asbestos rolls on his way to the phone. A short time later guards arrived from the main gate, and the four card players were escorted across the open space to the employment manager's office.

As they passed from view Canfield turned from the doorway of the electrical supply warehouse. He grinned at Dave.

"Four of a kind, but the guard turned up with a straight flush."



CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

THE SOUND of the alarm clock awakened Dave at sixty-three the next morning. It was Saturday and he had to report to the Yacht Club for patrol duty at eight. He left his bed grudgingly and moved to close the window. But Dave was not prepared for the sight that greeted him.

A fog bank had rolled down from the Strait during the night, blotting out the harbor and the buildings of the Seattle business district. From the water came the whistle of steamers groping their way through the thick, damp mist, and the deep-throated blare of the West Point fog horn rumbled its warning through the gray gloom.

Puget Sound fog! It was a new experience for Dave. He leaned against the window sill and stared wide-eyed at the enveloping cloud. From the street below he could hear the rush of early morning traffic. It sounded ghost-like. He could not see the cars, but he could hear the squeal of brakes and the tooting of horns. It was evident that fall fogs were not uncommon in Seattle, for the people were going about their business in the usual way.

Dave took a shower and started to dress. He glanced at the calendar. It was the nineteenth day of the month, and that meant only one thing to Dave. It meant that on the following morning three ships would be launched from the ways of the Northern Shipyards—three ships that would bring the Army and Navy Production Award to the big plant on Harbor Island. These ships were important to Dave and to every loyal worker in the Northern yards.

But for some reason Dave felt ill at ease. The dismissal of the four men the previous evening had left him with a feeling of foreboding. He knew that Butch Kruger was a trouble-maker, and it was probable that the other

three were no better. He felt sure that the man named Otto was in league with Butch and there was no telling what might happen. He was aware of the tie-up between Butch Kruger and Miller Goerman, for it was Butch who had given him Goerman's telephone number.

The thought of that telephone number made Dave search through his pockets. He found the slip of paper and read the number. Elliott 33462! A plan was taking shape in Dave's mind. It might be dangerous, but at the same time it might lead to the discovery of important information. Dave felt like a detective as he turned to the telephone and dialed the number—Elliott 33462.

The bell rang several times before a sleepy voice answered.

"Yes. What is it?"

"I want to speak to Miller Goerman," Dave said.

"This is Miller Goerman."

"This is Dave Marshal calling."

"Dave who?"

"Dave Marshal. I work at the Northern Shipyards. You asked me to call you if I had something of interest to report."

"That's right. I did. Well, what is it, Marshal?"

"I just wanted to report that four men were dismissed at the yards last night."

"Yes?" There was no great surprise in Goerman's voice. "What's so unusual about that?"

"They were dismissed for playing poker on company time."

"Who were they?"

"Butch Kruger," Dave said, "and Otto and a man named Torchy Smith. The fourth man was a helper in the machine shop. I don't know his name."

There was a moment of silence at the other end of the wire.

"Yes," Goerman said finally. "I know about that. What's the idea of calling me at this hour of the morning?"

"I just wanted to 'play ball,' " Dave said, borrowing one of Goerman's phrases. "I couldn't call you later because I'm leaving on the *Gullflight* and won't be back until evening."

"Listen," Goerman said. "I appreciate your calling. Now forget about playing ball. I've changed my mind, see?"

"Do you mean you aren't going to pay me?" Dave asked, trying to put the proper shade of concern in his voice. "You promised to pay me if I called."

"Sure. I know. Well, listen—hold the line a minute."

Dave waited, his heart pumping harder than usual. His hand trembled on the receiver he held to his ear. Perhaps he was being foolish, playing into Goerman's hands this way, but if it meant stopping some treachery or uncovering some plan of destruction, it would be worth it. Finally Goerman's voice sounded in the receiver.

"Hello?" The tone carried a note of impatience.

"Hello," Dave replied.

"Okay, Marshal. I promised to pay you and I always keep my promises. Now listen carefully. You come down to 518½ Washington Street at ten tonight. Come up to the second floor and knock on the door of Room 203. Knock twice, and then three times, see? That'll be the signal."

"I get you," Dave replied. "At ten o'clock tonight."

"That's right. But come alone. You understand this is strictly between the two of us."

"I understand," Dave replied.

"Did you get the address?"

Dave repeated the number on Washington Street.

"Okay," Goerman said. "I'll be waiting for you."

Dave placed the receiver on the hook and sat for a moment staring at the telephone. Washington Street! He remembered his first day in Seattle and what had happened to him on Washington Street. It was a luckless street so far as he was concerned, and the fact that Miller Goerman had his headquarters there did not make it more appealing.

Dave finished his dressing and went to the coffee shop for breakfast. When he was through he waited on the front steps for Bill Taylor. He thought of telling Bill about the telephone conversation with Goerman, but decided to wait. He had started this little investigation and he would have to follow it through alone. There

would be time to call the authorities when he had some evidence.

Bill picked him up at seven-thirty and they drove to the Yacht Club. The fog was lifting slightly and it was not too difficult to drive.

"Does Seattle have much fog like this?" Dave asked.

"Quite a bit," Bill replied. "It comes in streaks. There'll be four or five days in a row when it gets foggy at night, but it generally clears by noon. Sometimes it gets so thick at night that drivers jump the curbs and find themselves up on the sidewalks."

"I'm not used to fog," Dave said.

"Well, if you live around here for any length of time you'll get used to it. Puget Sound isn't as famous as London for its fog, but when it rolls in here it really rolls. It isn't like that high ocean fog that blows in over San Francisco in the afternoon. Puget Sound fog gets right down in the gutters and you can cut it with a knife."

The *Gullflight* spent the day patrolling the waters south of Possession Point. Just as Bill predicted, the fog disappeared by noon and the day was bright and clear. But when the sun had set in the evening and they had turned the prow of the cruiser toward Ballard and Rusty's boathouse, the haze was beginning to gather along the Sound, and to the north a gray bank of cloud obscured Whidby Island and the waters of Admiralty Inlet.

"We're in for another night of it," Bill said, as they

nosed in to the mooring. "It'll be thicker than soup by nine o'clock."

"Do you think the fog will hinder the launchings on the graveyard shift?" Dave asked.

Bill shook his head. "Nothing will hinder that. Dad has his heart set on putting those ships in the water before morning. He's given his word to the Maritime Commission and he'll keep it if he has to push them down the ways himself."

"Who got the patrol assignment?"

"Coast Guard Reserve, I guess. Anyway, we didn't get it and we can be glad of it in this fog."

Matt Garland came out of the pilothouse.

"Are you staying aboard tonight, Bill?" he asked.

Bill Taylor nodded.

"Okay. We'll see you in the morning." He turned to Dave. "Want a ride to town?"

"Yes. Thanks," Dave said, following the skipper. They stopped for a moment at the boathouse to talk with Rusty and then went on to Matt Garland's car. It was an eight-mile ride to the city center. The skipper left Dave at Fifth and Union Street and Dave caught a bus to his apartment. It was nine o'clock when he arrived.

He changed his clothes hurriedly, not bothering to hang his uniform in the closet. He planned to go to the address Miller Goerman had given him and collect his money, but this time he would not go alone. He would take a taxi and keep the driver handy in case of trouble.

When he had the money he would turn it over to the authorities and tell them the whole story.

When Dave left the apartment it was twenty minutes of ten. The fog that had been gathering when they moored the *Gullflight* had settled over the city and it was impossible for Dave to see the street light at the end of the block. He walked toward Madison Street. The lights of the drug store on the corner began to take shape through the mist. He found a taxi at a stand near the hospital.

"I want to go to 518½ Washington Street," he said, climbing into the rear seat.

"Okay." The cab driver flipped the meter and stepped on the starter. "If this fog gets any thicker I'll have to start usin' a compass."

Dave didn't answer. He was too preoccupied to carry on a conversation. He was thinking of the possibilities of this venture, and hoping that he was doing the right thing. If his plan did not work out it would not be the first time that his good intentions had backfired. Searching for the missing strakes in the shipyard had brought him nothing but trouble, and he was apprehensive about the outcome of this new attempt to solve the mystery. Yet if he could do anything to involve Miller Goerman the time would have been well spent. That was the thought that prompted him to continue—that, and the desire to do something to justify the confidence Judson Taylor had placed in him.

The taxi had to creep along the streets. The driver kept the windshield wiper going, but even that did not provide clear vision. He drove by the lights of other cars and by dead reckoning. It was amazing to Dave that he managed to get anywhere. But finally he drew up alongside the curb. "This is 518½ Washington Street."

"Could you wait for me?" Dave asked. "I won't be gone long."

"Sure, providin' you pay the charges up to now. I've had too many guys walk in the front door of a joint like this and out the back."

Dave grinned as he paid the bill.

"Listen," Dave said. "If I'm not out of here in fifteen minutes, I wonder if you'd do me a favor."

"Sure. What is it?"

"Call the police."

"Say, wait a minute, buddy. I'm not gettin' mixed up in anything crooked. Maybe I better call the police right now."

Dave handed the driver another bill. "Not right now. In fifteen minutes. I'll guarantee you won't get mixed up in anything crooked."

Dave turned toward the dimly lighted doorway and left the cab driver mumbling to himself.

There was nothing inviting about the entrance to 518½ Washington Street. The door sagged on loose hinges and the grimy glass, with the single word ROOMS printed on it, gave little preview of what lay beyond.

Dave opened the door hesitatingly. He stepped into a narrow vestibule and the door swung closed behind him. A long flight of narrow stairs led upward, and at the top a single yellow light cast a sickly glow over the threadbare carpeting. Dave started up the stairs and each step creaked under his weight. He felt like a prowler exploring a building which he had no right to enter. Half-way up the stairs he stopped. Perhaps it would be wiser if he waited. Perhaps he should go back to his apartment and mind his own business. Then suddenly it occurred to him that this *was* his business. He was working for the Northern Shipyards, and the scheming of Miller Goerman was certainly not aimed at the best interests of Judson Taylor's plant. If Goerman had sabotage in mind, then this mission was of vital significance, for Miller Goerman would not be striking at Judson Taylor alone—he would be striking at the nation. Dave's fists clenched and he continued his climb with determined steps.

The hall widened at the top of the stairs to provide room for a rickety table and two dilapidated rocking chairs that were pushed against the wall. No one seemed to be around, so Dave started down the second floor corridor, reading the numbers on the doors.

When he came to the room marked 203, he paused for a moment. Miller Goerman had said to knock twice and then three times. He could see a faint light under the crack at the bottom of the door. He drew in his

breath and lifted his hand, knocking twice. Then he waited and knocked three more times. For a moment there was no answer.

"Come in," a voice finally said.

Dave turned the knob and pushed the door half open. Then he stood rooted, speechless. Two men were standing close to the wall, both armed with automatics.

"Well, come in," one of them said, emphasizing his command with a flourish of the gun in his hand.

There was nothing else to do but obey. Dave stepped into the room.

"Close the door," one of the men said.

Dave fumbled behind him and gave the door a shove. As it slammed shut it seemed to him that it closed on all of the freedom he had ever known. He had walked into some kind of trap; he had blundered into trouble again. This time it was serious. These men meant business. He could tell it by their confidence and by the calm, sure way they handled the guns.

"Sit down," was the next command.

Dave looked around for a chair. He was not conscious that his eyes were wide, that the color had drained from his face. He found the chair and sat nervously on the edge of it.

One of the men moved close to Dave and felt his pockets for firearms. Finding none, he backed away and looked at Dave searchingly.

"What do you want here?" he asked finally.



"I—I came to see a man," Dave gulped.

"Who?"

"Miller Goerman."

"What did you want to see him for?"

"He asked me to come."

"Why?"

"He was—he was going to pay me some—some money," Dave stammered. "But I didn't want the money," he hastened to add.

"Oh! You didn't want the money. Why did you come then?"

"To find out—I came to find out about Miller Goerman."

The two men looked at each other and one of them rubbed the back of his neck.

"To find out about Miller Goerman?" The man sounded puzzled. "What did you expect to find out about him?"

"I thought he was up to something."

A smile broke at the corner of the other man's mouth. "Up to something! I'll say he's up to something. And say, kid—you don't know it, but you almost got yourself shot."

"Who—who are you?" Dave asked.

One of the men pulled his coat back.

"Federal Bureau of Investigation."



CHAPTER NINETEEN

DAVE SLUMPED back in the chair, an expression of sudden relief on his face. "Then—then you're here for the same reason I am," he said.

"It begins to look that way," one of the officers said. "Who are you?"

"Dave Marshal. I work at the Northern Shipyards."

"You had a lot of nerve coming up here alone and unarmed."

"I was just trying to get information. I had a hunch Goerman was plotting sabotage in the yards."

"Your hunch wasn't far wrong," the government man said. "We had a tip-off to come here and pick up Goerman, but when we arrived he had left. The only clue we found was this slip of paper."

The officer handed Dave a worn envelope. Scribbled on the back of it, in black pencil, were the letters CGA and the number 708.

"Say!" Dave exclaimed. "This is the Coast Guard Auxiliary number for the *Gullflight*. It explains a lot. It was Goerman and his men who came to Rusty's wharf and took down the number of the boat."

"Wait a minute," one of the officers said. "Take it a little slower. We don't follow you."

Dave told the F. B. I. men of the visit three men had made to Rusty's boathouse the night he was stationed aboard the *Gullflight*.

"Don't you see?" Dave continued. "This means the *Gullflight* has something to do with Goerman's plan."

"Where is the *Gullflight* now?"

"At Ballard. Bill Taylor is aboard, but he's alone."

"Well, what's keeping us here?" the officer said.

"How about a telephone?" Dave said. "I could call Rusty—see if Bill is all right."

"There's a phone in the pool room down on the corner."

"Let's go," the other officer said.

Dave followed the federal agents down the long flight of stairs. At the door they were confronted by two uniformed policemen and an excited taxi driver.

"Your fifteen minutes was up," the driver said, "so I called the cops."

"It's all right," Dave said. "I won't need them."

The F. B. I. men identified themselves and the city officers were satisfied, but curious. They lingered near the doorway while Dave made arrangements with the cab driver to wait until he had placed the phone call. The two federal men went with Dave to the pool hall and stood near the phone booth while Dave dialed the number for Rusty's boathouse.

After a short wait a telephone supervisor's voice came over the wire. "What number were you calling?"

Dave repeated the number.

"I'm sorry," the supervisor said, "but that phone is out of order."

Dave left the booth. "I can't get him," he said. "There's something fishy going on out there. They say the phone's out of order."

"We'll take a run out to Ballard," one of the officers said. "It might lead to something."

They hurried to the taxi that was still waiting, and Dave clambered into the rear seat with the G-men.

"Where to?" the driver asked.

"Rusty's boathouse, at Ballard," Dave said.

"We might as well get acquainted," the taller of the two officers said. "My name's Sawyer and my partner here is Al Reed."

"I'm glad to know you," Dave said, "and I mean *glad*. When I walked into that room I thought you were a couple of Goerman's men waiting to take me for a ride."

"Maybe you listen to Gang Busters too often," Sawyer said.

Dave grinned sheepishly.

They were driving up Second Avenue and the street lights and store windows dispelled some of the fog. Dave glanced at a clock in front of a jewelry store. It was ten-thirty.

During the ride to Ballard, Sawyer and Reed plied Dave with questions which he answered carefully. They asked him about the explosion in the shipyard, about the four men who were fired for loafing, and about the missing strakes and the disappearance of Withers. They were evidently pumping him to see how much he knew about the sabotage in the yards. Dave held nothing back from them. He even told them of Miller Goerman's visit to his apartment and of his experiences on the *Gull-flight*.

"The Bureau has been watching this gang for weeks," Sawyer said. "We had a tip yesterday that tonight was

the night, and we're closing in on them. Reed and I aren't the only men working on this case. There are others."

"That's good," Dave replied. "It'll take more than one man to round up this crowd. Do you know what they plan to do?"

"No," Sawyer said, "but we'll find out before the night is over."

The fog was so thick over the Ballard Bridge that the taxi had to travel in low gear. The driver kept poking his head out of the door window for better vision and Dave watched the right side of the street, shouting a warning when the cab got too close to the curb.

"This is a swell night for a picnic," Sawyer said, gazing through the glass at the gray, swirling mist.

"Or an air raid," Reed added. "If the Japs came over tonight, they couldn't find Seattle."

When they finally reached Ballard, the taxi stopped near the flight of stairs that led down to Rusty's boat-house. Sawyer signed for the cab and told the driver to wait.

Dave led the way down the steps and Sawyer and Reed followed, groping with one hand on the railing.

"Are you sure there's a bottom to this?" Reed asked.

"There was when I came up this evening."

At the foot of the stairs they found the shack where Rusty lived. There was no light inside and Dave pounded on the door. Rusty did not answer.

"Come on," Dave said. "We'll see if the *Gullflight* is here."

Sawyer flashed a light along the planks of the float, but it was not much help. By feeling their way, they kept from falling into the water. When they reached the place where the *Gullflight* should have been moored, Dave straightened and put his hand on Sawyer's arm. "It's not here," he said, his voice strained. "The *Gullflight's* gone."

"What's that mean?" Sawyer asked.

"I don't know," Dave replied. "Bill Taylor was alone. They may have stolen the boat and kidnaped Bill."

"Let's go back to that shack," Sawyer said. "We'll need a telephone."

But the door of Rusty's shack was locked.

"How about a window?" Reed asked. "We could break in that way."

Dave tried the window. "It isn't locked. Give me that light," he added. "I'll crawl in and unbolt the door."

Reed gave him a boost and Dave disappeared through the opening. He flashed the light around the room as he moved toward the door. He let the officers in and they switched on the light.

"Look!" Reed said, pointing.

The telephone had been torn from the wall.

A strange spluttering sound came from an adjoining room. The three men rushed to the door and Dave

swung the flashlight around the room. In a corner they found Rusty tied securely to a chair and gagged with a handkerchief. His eyes were wide open, and his efforts to talk only resulted in queer gurgling sounds in his throat.

"What in blazes——" Dave exclaimed.

The three men hurried to Rusty's aid. Sawyer and Reed cut the ropes that bound him and Dave untied the gag.

For a moment Rusty mumbled unintelligible sounds. When he was finally able to speak, the words came haltingly.

"There was four of 'em—the no-good—why, they took me for a sucker—stuck a gun in my back—tied me up."

"Did you see them?" Dave asked.

"Sure I saw 'em—strangers—they got Bill first—heard the scuffle, an' went to see what it was all about—that's when they grabbed me."

"Did you know they were stealing the *Gullflight*?"

"Yeah. Said something about Useless Bay—said they'd take care of Bill when they got to Useless Bay."

"Useless Bay!" Dave exclaimed. "That's where Mister Gig lives."

"Mister who?" Sawyer asked.

"Mister Gig. He's half cracked—makes fishing gear. We put in there once with the *Gullflight*."

"How far is it to this Useless Bay?" Reed asked.

"'Bout twenty miles," Rusty said, stretching the aching muscles of his arms.

"Any way of getting there?"

"In this fog?" Rusty said.

"That's where the *Gullflight* went," Dave said. "It must be possible."

"Sure, it's possible," Rusty said, "if you want to take a chance on it. I've got a speedboat tied up down at the float. We could make it in less than an hour."

"Bill's in real danger," Dave said. "We'll have to help him."

"Okay. I'll take you there," Rusty said, "but it'll be a trip you'll never forget."

"Let's get going," Sawyer said, glancing at his watch. "I'll tell the cab driver we won't need him any more."

Rusty put on a heavy jacket and led the way down to the speedboat. It was a trim sport craft, with a powerful inboard motor and a wide V-bow.

"How fast can this boat go?" Dave asked.

"Oh, thirty, maybe thirty-five," Rusty said, uncovering the motor.

Sawyer and Reed took seats in the stern and Dave sat forward. Rusty started the motor and took the seat behind the steering wheel. The speedboat backed away from the float, and when there was plenty of clearance Rusty put the engine in gear and inched up on the accelerator. The boat gathered headway, and as the pro-

PELLER blades dug in, the bow lifted and white spray fanned to port and starboard like a curling plume, only to disappear in the darkness and fog.

There was no visibility ahead, no sign of a light, no sound save the deep rumble of the speedboat's motor. The gray cloud of mist pressed in on them from all sides, turning to glistening moisture on the varnished deck. Dave looked back at Sawyer and Reed. They were no more than shadows in the stern—two hunched shapes, detached and unreal, for this was not the proper light for shadows. This was some ethereal void beyond water and land and they were hurtling through space, comet-like. Rusty clung to the wheel of the bouncing boat, eyes squinting ahead, but there was nothing to see—nothing but a wet curtain of fog, thicker than smoke.

"Aren't we taking an awful chance?" Dave shouted at Rusty.

"Yeah. That's what I told you. We're takin' a chance, all right. If we hit a driftwood log at this speed, we'll loop the loop."

"How do you know we're heading in the right direction?"

"Compass," Rusty said, pointing to the instrument panel.

The boat roared on through the darkness. Dave thought that aviators must feel like this flying blind through clouds. But it was not quite like flying. A pilot had an altimeter to show the distance to the ground.

There was no instrument on this speedboat that would warn them of drifting logs or of an approaching freighter. If they made it, it would be blind luck.

"How will you know when we near the island?" Dave asked Rusty. "If we pile up on the beach at this speed it won't be fun."

"I know about how long it should take us. I know every rock and every bay on the Sound. We'll slow down in ten or fifteen minutes."

"Do you think it's safe to go into Useless Bay?" Dave asked. "They'd hear us coming."

"We could go into Cultus Bay and walk across the peninsula back of Scatchet Head. I know a trail across there."

"That might be the best idea," Dave said. "It would give us a chance to look things over before they knew we were there."

Rusty slowed down a short time later as he had planned.

"What's the matter?" Sawyer called from the stern seat.

"We're getting near the island," Dave shouted back.

"Take one of those oars in the bottom," Rusty said to Dave, "and get up on the bow. If you see any rocks, shove us off."

The speedboat had slowed until only a tiny ripple curled from the bow as it inched through the water.

"Try sounding for bottom," Rusty suggested.

Dave stuck the oar down in the water as far as he could reach. "Not yet," he shouted back.

He kept sounding at regular intervals and before long his oar hit gravel. Almost at the same instant the dark shore loomed ahead. Rusty veered off. "That's Possession Point," he said. "Hit her right on the nose. We'll follow the shore into Cultus Bay."

Cultus Bay curves into the southern tip of Whidby Island like a fish-hook, and Rusty nosed into this arm of water feeling his way with some sixth sense that seemed to warn him when danger lay ahead. He edged the boat up to the western shore, and the bow scraped gently as it lodged on a sandy spit.

"End of the line," Rusty said to the two men who still sat hunched in the stern. "We'll have to walk from here in."

"How far?" Reed asked.

"Couple of miles. We figured it would be safer to take 'em by surprise. If we went into Useless Bay they'd be waiting for us."

Rusty tied the mooring line to a large log stranded on shore and the four men started down the beach toward the trail that Rusty knew. It was not easy finding the path in the fog, but Rusty finally stumbled upon it and the other three followed.

Wet bushes slapped them as they moved up the bluff, and they had to climb over fallen trees and grope their way along narrow cut-backs. Once they had reached the



top of the rise, the going was easier. Rusty trudged along with a flashlight. Sawyer and Reed were close behind, and Dave brought up the rear. They were all breathing heavily from the climb, but when the path straightened out they got their second wind.

"Wonder what time it is?" Dave asked.

Sawyer turned a light on his watch. "Twelve-twenty."

"I hope we aren't too late."

They had reached the bluff overlooking Useless Bay, but it was impossible to see twenty feet in the fog. Dave found a limb broken from a tree and picked it up.

"What do you want that for?" Sawyer asked.

"Mister Gig has a couple of dogs," Dave said, "and they don't like a club."

As they neared the orchard Rusty stopped, and the men went into a huddle. "We'd better scatter out," he said. "Surround the open space. Then if they discover one of us, they won't know about the others."

"Good idea," Sawyer said. "We'll move in at a signal."

"Listen," Dave said. "Since I know this set-up, suppose I go in as close as I can and find out what's up. You can wait on the edge of the clearing, and when I whistle you come."

"What about the dogs?" Rusty said.

"I'll take care of the dogs," Dave promised, his grip tightening on the club he carried.

As Dave started through the orchard, moving stealthily

from tree to tree, he expected to hear a chorus of howls from the Great Danes. But there was no sound from the dogs. Dave was puzzled. What if Mister Gig had gone? What if they were too late? He approached cautiously. No, they were not too late. There was a light burning in the cabin. He crept to the window, peered in. The cabin was empty. Dave moved to the door and placed his hand on the latch.

"Stay where you are," a voice said from the darkness.



CHAPTER TWENTY

DAVE WHIRLED around. A man was standing close to the cabin, and the light from the window glinted on the barrel of a gun.

Dave still carried the club over his shoulder, and without stopping to think of the danger, he brought it down

in a smashing blow against the man's arm. The gun discharged into the ground, and before his surprised assailant could bring his hand up, Dave lunged at him with a diving tackle that caught the man around the hips.

With a grunt the man sagged back, and Dave went with him, swinging fists that crashed against unprotected ribs. Dave locked the man's wrist in a firm grasp and saw the gun slip from his fingers. Now the fight was on even terms, and Dave drew back, waiting for an opening. The man struggled to his feet and Dave's fist caught him on the chin. He twisted sideways, clutching at Dave's clothing as he fell. His arms locked around Dave's ankles, and Dave toppled backward, kicking to free himself. He knew this fight would not last long. The other men would hear the shot and come running. But it was not over.

The man loosened his grip, lunged for the gun. Dave struggled to his feet and leaped. He landed on the man's back and they rolled away, sprawling in the dirt. Dave got his arm around the other's neck and tightened his grip. He could feel his prisoner clawing to get free; he was kicking at Dave's shins and muttering curses. Dave only increased the leverage, straining every muscle in his body. The man sputtered and choked, but his struggling grew less violent. Dave had him locked in a body scissors and a strangle hold, and he was helpless.

They were still on the ground when Rusty and the federal men arrived.

"What kind of an animal have you caught?" Rusty said, flashing a light over them.

"I don't know," Dave panted, releasing his grip. "Polecat, maybe."

They dragged the man into the lighted cabin and propped him on a chair. His face was pasty white, and he was still groggy from the beating Dave had given him. Dave took one look at the man and blinked in surprise.

"Do you know him?" Sawyer asked.

"He's Withers," Dave replied. "He's the fellow who has been missing ever since he changed the strake numbers in the yards."

"Withers?" Reed said. "We have a report on him. Lawson turned it in."

"Yes, I remember," Reed said. "Well, where are the rest of these birds?"

"He seems to be the only one here," Dave said.

"Maybe we can make him talk," Reed said. He shook Withers. "All right, Withers, out with it. Where have the others gone?"

Withers looked at Reed, a blank expression on his face.

"We'll make him talk," Sawyer said. "Listen, Withers, you know what happened to those eight saboteurs on the east coast. Two of them saved their lives by talking. Now are you going to talk, or do you want to get the kind of treatment the other six got?"

Withers did not reply. He simply stared at Sawyer.

Reed had stepped outside. He opened the door a moment later. "There's someone in that shed back of the cabin," he said. "I heard a noise out there."

"Rusty, stay with this man," Sawyer said. "Here's his gun. If he starts anything, use it. Come on, Dave."

Dave went with the two F. B. I. men. They approached the shed carefully, fearing some kind of trap. There was a noise inside the shed, all right. It was a thumping sound, as if someone were knocking to attract attention.

Sawyer stepped to the door.

"Come out of there," he shouted.

There was no response.

Dave knew the door had no hinges, so he toppled it backwards. Sawyer flashed a light into the shed, but he could see nothing but work benches, and old fishing gear hanging from the walls. Yet the thumping continued.

The three men entered the shack and stood still, listening. The thumping seemed to come from under the floor.

"That work bench," Dave said, focusing his light on the floor. "There's a trap door under that work bench."

"Come on," Sawyer said. "Give me a hand here."

Sawyer and Reed pushed the work bench aside. Dave pulled the floorboards up and turned the flashlight into a hole dug beneath the shed. A man was down there, tied and gagged as Rusty had been. He was lying on his side, and he had managed to wriggle around until he could kick the timbers that lined the hole.

Sawyer took the flashlight from Dave and turned it on the man's face.

"It's Lawson!" he exclaimed. "What in the world are you doing down there, Lawson? Of all the blinking places for an F. B. I. man to hide!"

But Lawson could not reply. He was gagged too tightly.

Sawyer lowered himself into the hole and cut the ropes that bound the man. Lawson was weak from struggling with the ropes, and the others had to help him from the hole.

When he was on his feet he swayed slightly, and muttered imprecations. "Those low-down—good-for-nothing—why, they heard me tipping you off, and they knocked me colder than a tomato. When I woke up, I was on board that blooming yacht."

Dave looked closely at the man. In the beam thrown by the flashlight he saw that he had a scar down his cheek, and Dave caught his breath in astonishment.

"Why, you're—you're Otto," Dave gasped.

"Otto, my eye," Lawson returned. "I don't want to hear that name again."

"But this man was fired from the shipyards with Butch Kruger," Dave protested.

"Sure, I was fired from the shipyards. I've been trailing Butch Kruger for two months. Butch and I were buddies, till he heard me tipping off headquarters." Lawson grinned.

"I don't understand," Dave said. "It was you who got me to take the cowhide bag from Goerman when he arrived from Alaska."

"Sure," Lawson replied. "And do you know what was in that cowhide bag?"

"No," Dave returned.

"Secret plans," Lawson said. "Plans of all the fortifications in Alaska. They were described in code. They looked like insurance policies, but that was just a cover-up. The code words were in those policies. We could have arrested Goerman then, but we wanted to use the bag for bait. We knew there were others in the gang."

"Why did the two men hit me over the head and steal the bag?"

"That's where our plans slipped up. We lost the trail for a while, till I picked it up again through Butch Kruger."

"This isn't getting us anywhere," Sawyer said, as they started for the cabin. "The men are gone. We've caught Withers, but he won't talk."

"Don't worry. They'll be back," Lawson said. "They've gone to do their little job under cover of fog, and then they're coming back here to get Withers."

"You know about the job?" Sawyer asked.

"I know about it now," Lawson replied. "They held out on me until tonight. They must have suspected me. After I tipped you off that something was going to happen this evening they got tough. When we boarded the

Coast Guard boat they tied me up. They left me here when they went to plant the mines."

"Plant the mines? What mines?" Sawyer asked.

"They've gone to plant submerged mines in the harbor off the Northern Shipyards so that the next ships launched will hit the mines and keep right on going to the bottom. They stole the Coast Guard boat because they figured it wouldn't cause suspicion. Mister Gig is an enemy agent who specializes in high explosives. He manufactured the mines out of discarded gasoline tins."

Dave thought of the time the *Gullflight* had overtaken Mister Gig's boat. There had been empty gasoline tins in the boat then. Things were beginning to clear in Dave's mind.

"Where's Bill?" Dave asked.

"They took him with them on the cruiser."

"But the launchings!" Dave exclaimed. "Three ships are going down the ways at two in the morning. What time is it?"

Sawyer looked at his watch. "It's ten past one."

Dave whirled to Rusty. "We have to get word back. We must get to a phone."

"Well, what's keepin' us?" Rusty said. "You and I can take the speedboat and get across to Mukilteo in plenty of time. We'll find a phone there."

"Go ahead," Sawyer said. "Reed and Lawson and I will stay here. We'll get ready to welcome this little gang when the *Gullflight* returns to Useless Bay."

"Come on." Dave started on the run, Rusty following him. They made their way back to Cultus Bay in half the time it had taken them to travel the distance before. The speedboat was moored where they had left it. They clambered in and shoved off.

Rusty soon had the motor turning over, and though the fog still clung to the water, they moved out of the bay at full speed. Rusty gave Possession Point a wide berth and then cut across the narrow channel that separates the island from the mainland.

"How long for this trip?" Dave shouted.

"Fifteen or twenty minutes," Rusty replied. "You can get a phone at the railroad depot in Mukilteo. There's a man on duty all night."

Rusty had the motor open at full throttle. They bounced through a tide-rip and plunged into a blinding gray mist that swirled around them with damp stickiness. Save for the curling ribbons of foam at the bow of the boat, Dave could not tell where the fog and water met.

"I hope you know where you're going," he shouted at Rusty.

"I know where I'm going," Rusty shouted back. "All I hope is that we get there."

Suddenly a dark shape loomed ahead of them and a deep, vibrating whistle split the air. Rusty gave the wheel a sudden spin and the speedboat slithered off to starboard, bouncing and bobbing in the wash of a huge

..450

lumber freighter that was nosing its way through the channel.

"Whew!" Dave exploded, when he had caught his breath.

"Boy! That was a close one," Rusty muttered. "There ought to be a law against freighters on a night like this."

Rusty swerved back on the course and continued at the same reckless speed he had shown before.

"Don't you think we better slow down?" Dave asked.

"You want to stop those launchings, don't you?"

"Yes," Dave said.

"Okay, then. We haven't much time."

The craft roared through the channel and Dave clung to the gunwale, expecting any minute to be plunged into the water. Suddenly, Rusty reduced the speed of the boat, and the roar of the engine dropped to a deep rumble.

"We ought to be near the point," Rusty said. "There's a lighthouse on Mukilteo Point. Keep your ears open for the sound of the fog horn."

"If you'd cut the motor for a minute we might pick it up."

Rusty turned the switch and the rumble of the engine died away. The sound of the fog horn came through the mist—a harsh, blatant note.

"That's it," Rusty said. "We're only a few hundred yards off shore."

He started the engine again and the speedboat gath-

ered headway. As they neared the point, the intermittent sound of the horn could be heard above the noise of the motor, but it was impossible to see the blinking light.

"Take it easy," Dave cautioned. "We're getting close."

Without warning the bottom of the speedboat ground on a sandy shoal. Rusty slapped the switch and the motor choked.

"I'll say we're close," he shouted. "We're there."

The fog horn bellowed near by, sending strange, raucous echoes dancing through the gloom.

Dave took the oar and tested for bottom. The water was about three feet deep between the boat and the shore.

"We're hard on a sand bar," Rusty said. "You'll have to wade ashore, and I'll try to shove her off while you're gone."

Dave lowered himself over the side, and started for shore. The water was cold. He could hear Rusty muttering to himself as he tried to pry the boat loose.

"How are you doing?" Rusty called after him.

"Almost there," Dave shouted back, splashing through the shallow water. He made his way up on the sandy beach and started running toward the lighthouse. He had no way of knowing the time, but he guessed it must be almost two o'clock. He decided to try the lighthouse keeper's home instead of going on into the town.

After he had pounded on the door for several minutes,

a light finally shone in an upstairs window. A man's voice came down from above.

"What do you want?"

"Do you have a phone?" Dave called up.

"Yes."

"I must use it. It's urgent."

"Just a minute."

Dave waited impatiently. Finally the door opened.

"This is a fine time of night——" the lighthouse keeper started, but Dave interrupted him.

"We've just come from Whidby Island in a speed-boat. I must call Seattle. Where is the phone?"

"Out in the kitchen," the man said. He noticed Dave's wet clothes. "Looks like you swam across."

"Waded," Dave said. He was clicking the receiver hook, trying to get the operator. "What time is it?" Dave asked.

"Ten minutes of two."

When the operator answered, Dave's tone must have convinced her the call was important, for she rushed the connection.

"Hello! Who is this?" Dave was almost shouting.

"Northern Shipyards," the night switchboard girl said.

"Is the superintendent of the graveyard shift in his office?" Dave asked.

"No."

"Well, listen. Get him right away. Have him hold up

that launching. Stop the launching, do you get it? They've mined the water off the ways."

"Is this a gag?"

"I'll say it isn't," Dave bellowed. "Send a guard out there quick. Call the superintendent to the phone."

"Who is this calling?"

"Dave Marshal. I work in supplies on the swing shift. Hurry, understand? HURRY!"

It finally registered on the switchboard girl that this was an emergency. She called a guard and Dave could hear her giving him orders.

"Now, listen!" Dave said. "Call Mr. Taylor and tell him what has happened. Call Mead. Call Curt Kennedy. They'll all want to know. I'll hold this line open until you get the shift superintendent."

"Where are you?" the switchboard girl asked.

"Mukilteo. But that doesn't matter. Stop the launching. It must be stopped."

Dave's pleading finally got results. The shift superintendent came to the phone.

"What's all this commotion?" he roared.

Dave explained.

"The F. B. I. men are rounding up the gang now," he said. "Don't let those ships go down the ways. If you do, they'll keep right on going."

"This sounds silly to me."

"I don't care how it sounds. If you launch those ships they're sunk."



"Okay," the superintendent said, doubt still in his tone. "We'll hold everything until Judson Taylor gets here."

Dave sank back and sighed. That was the toughest job of persuasion he had ever attempted. He turned around. The lighthouse keeper was staring at him, eyes wide, mouth sagging.

When Dave returned to the shore, Rusty had the boat free.

"Did you make it, Dave?" he shouted.

"Yes," Dave said, "with a couple of minutes to spare."

When Rusty and Dave reached the Ballard boathouse, Dave called the head of the F. B. I. and told him what had happened. He also talked to Judson Taylor on the phone.

"—and Bill," Judson Taylor said. "Do you think he's safe?"

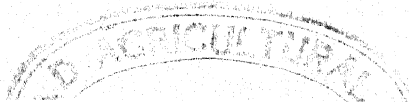
"I hope so. We won't know until the *Gullflight* gets here."

"Where are you now?" Judson Taylor asked.

"At Rusty's boathouse."

"I'll be right out."

Bill was safe. Dave knew it the minute the *Gullflight* loomed out of the fog an hour later, for Bill was in the pilothouse window. Sawyer and Reed were on deck and Lawson was in the after cabin with the handcuffed prisoners.



"We got 'em all," Sawyer shouted, as the boat nosed in to the float. "We picked 'em off one at a time as they landed."

"How many?" Rusty asked.

"Five. Miller Goerman, Butch Kruger, Withers, Torchy Smith and Mister Gig. A sorry looking bunch they are."

"What happened to the dogs?" Dave asked.

"Mister Gig got rid of them," Bill replied. "They planned to scatter as soon as this job was over."

On the way to town, Dave rode in Judson Taylor's car.

"I don't know how I can ever repay you," Judson Taylor said.

"You don't have to," Dave replied. "I'm working for you and that's enough."

"But it isn't. How would you like a vacation?"

"That would be great," Dave enthused. "I could go home for a visit."

When the fog lifted on Sunday, mine sweepers from Bremerton cleared the harbor of Mister Gig's explosive gasoline cans. Dave was the center of attention when the three big freighters were launched in the bright afternoon sunlight. They went down the ways on the swing shift. Even Powers, the yard foreman, shook Dave's hand. "I'm sorry," he said. "I had you all wrong, Dave."

Later in the day Judson Taylor had a wire from

Washington. The Northern Shipyards had been granted the Army and Navy Production Award.

Dave was not sure that he cared for the publicity that followed his part in the round-up of the saboteurs.

"I didn't capture them." Dave grinned. "In fact, I ran out on the F. B. I."

On Monday evening Bill Taylor took Dave to the Union Station to catch his train for North Dakota. Dave wore a new suit and a tan topcoat. He carried a new cowhide suitcase that he had seen in a travel shop. A cowhide bag! Dave smiled to himself as he handed it to a redcap.

"That suitcase makes me think of Miller Goerman's bag," Bill Taylor remarked.

"I know," Dave replied. "That's why I bought it."

Dave found his berth in the Pullman and then went to the observation platform. Bill was waiting on the station platform.

"I'll be seeing you in two weeks," Dave called to him.

"Two weeks?"

"Yes. I'll be back on the swing shift. And, Bill—look up some morning classes for me on the campus. I'm planning to start that engineering course."

When the train pulled out of the station, Dave waved goodby. He remained on the rear platform as the cars moved through the warehouse district. Beyond the cluttered railroad yards the lights of Harbor Island were a glow in the western sky.

The Limited gathered speed. As it moved out into the open valley a full moon rose above the foothills to the east. It shot silver darts of light along the glistening tracks. Silver rails in the moonlight! Dave Marshal was going home.